


3 1761 11630629 1



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
University of Toronto

<https://archive.org/details/31761116306291>



No. 18

N° 18

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

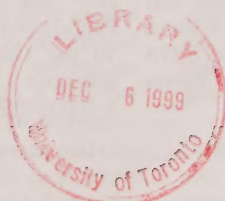
**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 25 November 1999

Jeudi 25 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers



Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 25 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 25 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO MARINE HERITAGE ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE PATRIMOINE MARIN DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act to preserve Ontario's marine heritage and promote tourism by protecting heritage wrecks and artifacts / Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à préserver le patrimoine marin de l'Ontario et à promouvoir le tourisme en protégeant les épaves et les artefacts à valeur patrimoniale.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): The purpose of the Ontario Marine Heritage Act is to enhance the protection and preservation of Ontario's marine heritage resources and to promote tourism.

By way of introduction, I wish to take you back 320 years. On September 18, 1679, the French explorer LaSalle watched his ship, the Griffon, set sail on Lake Huron, only to vanish without a trace. To this day, the Griffon remains the quest of countless divers and historians. Since 1679 there have been hundreds of storms and collisions on the Great Lakes, sinking thousands of ships and resulting in countless lives being lost.

On November 10, 1999, the 24th anniversary of the sinking of the Edmund Fitzgerald, I announced my intention to introduce the Ontario Marine Heritage Act. For years divers, historians and conservationists have argued that a new Marine Heritage Act is needed to ensure that the hundreds of wrecks lying in Ontario's waters are protected. These views pushed me to draft a bill that deals specifically with the protection of marine heritage.

The first European explorers came to Canada and Ontario by water. Trade in our country was built on furs and years of endless travel along inland waterways. Later, the Great Lakes became one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, the backbone of commerce in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and neighbouring US states. For example, in 1880 there were over 3,000 commercial vessels on the lakes, compared to approximately 200 today. This vol-

ume of traffic on the Great Lakes in the mid- to late 1800s was astounding.

Unfortunately, this also meant a higher incidence of disaster. A sudden and raging storm, a collision or an error of navigation can sink a vessel all too easily. Some say the Great Lakes have an almost insatiable appetite for sailors, passengers and ships. From cargo ships to canoes, our lakes and our rivers have not played favourites. Once a boat leaves port, there is always a chance it will run into a stiff gale, an exposed rock or another ship. Lack of communication, navigational aids and ship wreckers made travel especially dangerous in the 18th and 19th centuries.

The dangers faced by sailors differed throughout the lakes. Lake Erie is shallow and vicious, especially in the Long Point area. Lake Superior, as we know, is deep and cold, with a history of furious November gales like the one that took the Edmund Fitzgerald. Lakes Ontario, Huron, Michigan and St Clair have proven to be no less treacherous. Georgian Bay is filled with scores of camouflaged reefs and thousands of rock-encrusted islands. They have laid many a good ship and her crew to permanent rest.

In the two decades between 1878 and 1898, the US government reported 5,999 vessels wrecked on the Great Lakes, and of those 1,093 were total losses.

1010

Very recently, this summer, a Port Dover resident, Jim Murphy, wrote to me urging tougher marine heritage protection for the shipwrecks and the artifacts that lie in Ontario's water. Mr Murphy pointed out that the dive tourism industry was booming in Lake Erie partly because the water has cleared in recent years due to the zebra mussel and quagga mussel activity.

In his letter Mr Murphy stated, "With a province-wide diving community of several thousand divers, it is imperative that we have a strong protection mechanism in place to protect these sites from looting divers and salvors."

Marine archaeology has also gained attention with the 1996 court decision concerning the steamship Atlantic and Port Dover diver Mike Fletcher. The collision and sinking of the steamer Atlantic in Lake Erie occurred on August 20, 1852, and with up to 250 lives lost was one of the worst disasters on the lakes. In that court case, the court ruled that all shipwrecks and their associated artifacts located on Ontario's crown land are the property of the province. The court case of the steamship Atlantic

was publicized across North America and this Atlantic decision put divers and salvors on notice that the wrecks and the artifacts lying in Ontario lakes and rivers are the property of the crown. These factors, along with the importance that divers and marine historians across the province have put on protecting marine heritage, led me to draft a bill that would ensure that shipwrecks and other marine heritage sites are protected.

Under our current laws, the Ontario Heritage Act legislation does not specifically address marine issues. For example, the words "shipwreck" or "marine" do not appear in current heritage legislation. While it is well-meaning, people have told me that the heritage act needs to be supplemented with a clear message on the protection of heritage sites. This bill deals with current weaknesses in marine archaeological protection that I and others have identified.

This proposed Ontario Marine Heritage Act will make it illegal for anyone to enter a heritage wreck unless he or she is licensed to do so. It will also be an offence for non-licensed people to move part of a heritage wreck or remove silt or other naturally occurring substances in or around marine heritage sites. The Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation can exempt specific sites from these rules if the site is deemed to be less historically significant or if the site has been explored repeatedly.

Under this proposed legislation, it will be an offence to remove a protected artifact from a marine heritage site unless the person is licensed to do so. The act is meant to ensure that divers are careful, and makes it an offence to damage a marine heritage site or a protected artifact.

Currently, a person who finds a shipwreck is not required to report the location of that wreck. Some divers use this fact to keep newly discovered wrecks and artifacts to themselves. My bill requires that anyone who finds a shipwreck notify the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation of the nature and location of the wreck as soon as possible. As well, the minister will be required to publish a record of known marine heritage sites.

There will be tough penalties under the Ontario Marine Heritage Act. Anyone contravening the act will be subject to a fine of up to \$5,000 and a jail term of up to one year. If a corporation is involved, the maximum fine jumps to \$250,000. The bill also gives the OPP the power to seize vessels or equipment used to contravene the provisions of the Marine Heritage Act. If convicted of an offence, the court may award any seized property to the crown.

However, this proposed legislation is not intended to be a barrier to recreational divers. It is meant to educate people that shipwrecks are a precious and non-renewable resource.

Ontario has a strong marine history. Many, unfortunately, have perished while on the water, shipping merchandise or protecting our country. One cannot help but admire and respect the sailors of the Great Lakes. I believe we should honour the memories of these men and women by respecting their resting places. This legislation

will do that, and help to ensure that others respect them as well.

Will this affect the salvage industry? The answer is no. Salvors still have the opportunity to put in a claim on a ship that sinks. The wreck only becomes the crown's property if it is abandoned. The legislation deals more directly with abandoned wrecks already on the bottom of our lakes and rivers. If a ship were to go down now, the owners, the insurance companies or any legitimate salvors would have rights to the ship unless it's abandoned.

With respect to other jurisdictions, I've researched this in both Michigan and Nova Scotia and they are going down a similar road. Only a few places in the world are in this situation, and Ontario probably has as many shipwrecks lying in its waters as any other place in the world.

In conclusion, I believe this proposed legislation will be a good first step in protecting and preserving Ontario's thousands of heritage wrecks. Protection of marine heritage sites is very important to our diving community and to our growing dive tourism industry. Dive tourism and shipwreck protection go hand in hand, and I call on all members to pass this legislation. I look forward to any comments or constructive criticism.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'm pleased to stand this morning and comment on this bill that has been brought forward by the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

I wanted to support this bill, but I want to point out a significant problem. Oftentimes we have complex problems and we say simple solutions might solve them. But usually the simple solutions are wrong.

The member says the prohibited activities would be moving part of a heritage wreck or disturbing the silt or other substances that lie in a marine heritage wreck. That's pretty broad. It might cause some difficulties, but the intent is good. We all agree that removing a protected artifact or damaging the wreck should not happen.

The problem I have is that the one activity that would be prohibited is entering the physical portion of a heritage wreck. A huge part of tourism diving is being able to go into these wrecks, to go through the wreck, if you like. This says you have to be licensed. I'm not sure how the licensing would be carried out: who the licensing authority would be, what the regulations would be, and how a tourist from somewhere in the United States or around the world would get licensed.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: I agree with that, but let me tell you what it's going to do. I'll give you a little history of what has gone on in our area.

In 1987 we started to look into diving as a tourism venture in the Pelee Passage. In 1991, in the Leamington area, we got the Windsor chapter of SOS, Save Our Shipwrecks, involved. In 1991 we also got the Ministry of Tourism and the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Windsor, Essex County and Pelee Island involved. In 1992 the town of Leamington made a decision to take a

lead role in this tourism venture. In 1993 they brought in experts to give advice on how this should be done, and in 1995 it was more or less completed. Not only will this create a problem, I think, for what is called ErieQuest in the Essex area, but for years we've had the Fathom Five diving park in Tobermory. Diver magazine, for example, says, "Leamington, located at the northwestern end of Lake Erie, is fast becoming North America's dive centre." It may interest you to know that since the mid-1800s, over 275 ships have been recorded as being sunk somewhere in the Pelee Passage, between Point Pelee and Pelee Island. To date, there are 50 known locations of shipwreck sites in the Pelee Passage.

1020

There is a great history to these shipwrecks. Of course, over that period of time and number of wrecks, the cargo that was lost included food supplies, wood such as oak and walnut, and grain, ore and coal. Much of that was salvaged at the time and/or washed up on the shore.

The majority of the wrecks in the Pelee Passage lie in waters that are an average of 12 metres or 40 feet deep, the deepest being the ship Willis, a wreck that rests in approximately 22.5 metres or 74 feet of water.

The largest ship at the Pelee Passage wreck site is a wooden steamer called the Case. It was built in 1889 and sank in 1917. The Case was a large ship for the day. It was 91.7 metres or 301 feet long, 13 metres wide—42 1/2 feet for those of us who are not yet into the metric system—and had a draft of about 6.7 metres or 22 feet.

Shipwrecks are in fact artificial reefs, which provide a very attractive habitat for fish and many other marine organisms. It might interest people to know that underwater visibility has increased in Lake Erie in the last few years, from a low of about three metres or 10 feet, to a sightline now of 12 metres or 40 feet or more. This is greatly due to the much heralded and somewhat maligned zebra mussel.

The town of Leamington spearheaded development of the preservation—and I emphasize the word "preservation"—of the local submerged cultural and marine heritage. The name of the project is ErieQuest Marine Heritage Area. Of the 4,000 documented shipwrecks in the Great Lakes and the 250 in the Pelee Passage, 50, as I mentioned before, have already been found. Of these wrecks, 15 have been marked with a mooring buoy system so that the tourism diving public can have access to them.

Shipwreck exploring provides a unique insight into the heroic and tragic stories, the history of life and travel on the Great Lakes, and features the marine life and geographical aspects of the lake.

Local dive shops and charter operations fully service the dive area. The industry is providing lessons, equipment rentals and excursions, and non-diver excursions are also available for those who are equally curious. A heritage interpretive centre has been opened in Leamington, so that the public can have an on-land experience of the shipwrecks in Lake Erie.

I would emphasize too that there are direct, indirect and included economic impacts for the Leamington area

that this piece of legislation would have a detrimental effect on if it were passed in its form today. For example, the annual gross spending on diving tourism in the Leamington-Essex area is over \$5 million. The value added beyond that is estimated to be around \$4 million. It employs almost 100 people, and the employment income exceeds \$3 million.

As I said at the outset, I think the legislation and the intent are good. The problem I see with it is that it would appear to prevent a diver, licensed or unlicensed, from actually entering a wreck. Some of these older ships, unlike the freighters that ply the lakes today, are smaller and probably prohibit the diver from going into them because of their very superstructure. Certainly, getting close to the wreck, being able to go through those wrecks that allow that, is part of the attraction for tourism diving.

If this bill is to proceed—and I have some real questions as to whether it should, in fact, proceed as a private member's bill, and a colleague of mine will speak to that—we have to be very careful in order to attain the objectives that we want. I re-emphasize: I agree with the objectives of not damaging a heritage wreck, not removing artifacts. In fact, had I had the opportunity, and I just didn't, to research this further, I suspect there are penalties in place now, either provincial or federal. If those need to be tightened up, that's fine.

We have a tourism industry that's just in its beginnings. Its potential is just starting. We have to be very careful that we simply don't shut that down. I'm afraid that this private member's bill, as it's drafted now, would do that, and I think that's the wrong thing to do.

The Acting Speaker: I would remind the members that if they wish to have private conversations, outside this chamber would be the better place.

Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to speak to this bill because I think it's an important bill.

As you say, rare are those moments when you can stand up here in the opposition and agree with something that the government does. It's a rare moment. It's almost a pleasure to be able to speak to something that this government member has introduced today, that I can support. I want to say to this member and to the Conservative members that a whole lot of people in the heritage community are very excited by this.

I've been speaking to Jane Beecroft, whom I consider a friend. She's from the Heritage Toronto establishment. She was excited when she heard about this proposed bill that was to be debated here today. The reason why she is excited is because it is a rare moment when governments speak to heritage and speak to how we protect that heritage, so when she has a member who is about to introduce this—and I can see that we're going to have support by the others—she's very excited and I'm excited.

I was the Minister of Culture many, many years ago. I knew it was very difficult in that ministry to give the kind of equity that everybody deserved. I felt heritage, those who worked in the archives, in the museums, libraries, deserved to get their fair share of funding that they

weren't getting in that ministry. In pursuing that objective of equity, we thought it was time to change the Ontario Heritage Act, because it's way overdue.

I began that process of consulting with a whole lot of people in the heritage field. We had many meetings, in fact. That was a long process of involvement in consulting people in the heritage sector about what we needed to do to update our heritage laws. I began that work; the minister who followed me continued with the work; the minister that followed that minister continued the work; and eventually we didn't introduce the act. That would have been a benefit. It would have been something that would have uplifted the spirits of those who calmly and passively and quietly, but greatly, do the work of heritage in our community.

I would say that the New Democrats at the time failed the heritage community. We did. It was a bill that could easily have been passed, but we didn't do it. Then this government had an opportunity to be able to do some of the work that we started. They had four years. Of course, they've done nothing.

1030

They now have another mandate. I went to the Minister of Culture and Citizenship and said: "Look, we would support you if you were to introduce a bill that has had a great deal of consultation. You've got the heritage act ready to go. You just have to present it. You would get the communities to support you. You would get New Democrats to support you." I said: "I suspect the Liberals would support you. If you have the support of the opposition parties, you could easily introduce this bill and pass it. It won't take long. We don't have to debate it for very long."

She was quite polite and said that she has a lot of things to do and was quite interested in talking to me again to see what could come of those discussions. I'm being polite again.

But I tell you, it's an easy thing. Member from—long title—Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, you could be helpful in this regard. You have initiated something that the heritage community likes. Archaeology in water is something that is very, very important to these people. It shouldn't be something that's just very important to them; it should be important to all Ontarians, because it's part of our history, part of the heritage you want to be able to salvage. You want to be able to protect it, learn from it.

I say to you that as much as this is an important first step, I am hoping that the Minister of Culture is behind this or at least is supportive of this. I'm hoping in the discussions you have with her you can convince her to move to archaeology on land, natural heritage, which is as important as heritage in the water. We should worry about archaeology in rivers. I don't think this covers rivers; I don't think it does. But if you think it does, then say it. If you think it's ambiguous, then include it. But if it is, it's something that would excite me and would excite the heritage community.

You see what I'm saying, Toby, member from Norfolk? If this is good for archaeology in water, move to the

next step. There shouldn't be complications in doing that. While I concede that this is a good thing to do, I'm not quite sure why the Minister of Culture isn't saying to you, member from Norfolk, "We're going to take this bill over, because it's a good bill, but it's a little bill in the scheme of things, and we're going to make it bigger."

I'm hoping you can help me today by saying to me: "Member for Trinity-Spadina, I've had discussions with the minister. She's supportive. I can tell you that we're talking about how to introduce this new heritage act." If you can do that, we are moving in the right direction.

I tell you, you guys, women and men there, you can do a great deal of good for the heritage community. You can, with very little wreckage to yourselves, do something good for yourselves politically. You can introduce a bill that is so harmless, but you will have satisfied so many heritage workers out there, who, by the way, are probably your supporters by and large. You can do something good. Salvage something from this wreckage by doing something better than what you're about to do.

I'm saying to you that you are on the right track. I'm saying to you, as well, in relation to divers, I don't think divers should be touching the wreck. They shouldn't be there.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): How do you find it?

Mr Marchese: I didn't say that, my good friend from Mississauga South. What I said is that they shouldn't be in the wreck. If they are able to find it, God bless, we say, "This is great." But they've got to report it. I don't think it's a problem for them to be licensed. I don't like the idea that divers—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): More red tape.

Mr Marchese: Yeah, right. My friend from Niagara Centre says, "More red tape." Sure. But this is something that you need to protect. You can't have divers deciding on their own: "This is a wonderful piece of work here. This is a nice wreck, and I just want to get a piece of the action. I want to be able to do what I want." I don't think that's right. I'm sure my friend from Mississauga South doesn't think it's right either. Is that correct?

Hon Mrs Marland: What was the last thing you said?

Mr Marchese: I'm sure you think it's all right for them to explore, but I think you would find it wrong for them to simply, after having explored and found it—that you would not find it right for them to actually go on to the wreck and either take things from the wreck or damage it.

Hon Mrs Marland: I think we're talking about preservation of our heritage.

Mr Marchese: Well, that's what I was talking about. My friend from Mississauga South said, "I think we're talking about preservation of our heritage." That's why your colleague Toby has introduced this bill, and I'm happy to say I support it.

Member from Norfolk, you've done a good thing here. The heritage community believes you have done a good thing, and they're hoping, given that you've had the courage to introduce it here today, that you go to the next

step. Protecting archaeology in water is one thing, protecting archaeology on land is equally important, and if you can make that move, you can make the next one. I urge you to do that. I'm looking forward to your doing that publicly, I hope, so we can see those efforts. Otherwise, I'll be deceived by this act.

I congratulate the Conservative members for supporting this, because I anticipate they will, and I hope the Minister of Citizenship will be engaged and will introduce an Ontario Heritage Act that I helped bring forward in 1990-91. With that, I leave my good friend from Niagara Centre to add his comments to this debate.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): I too wish to add my support to this bill and wish to congratulate the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for bringing this up.

This is very important in my riding. We have in our riding the city of Hamilton, which has taken ownership of two warships that went down in 1812. I'd like to read a passage from a note that was sent out in 1812:

"Wind during the night from the westward and after midnight squally. Kept all hands at quarters and beat to windward in hopes to gain the wind of the enemy. At 2 am missed two of our schooners. At daylight discovered the missing schooners to be the Hamilton and Scourge. Soon after spoke to Governor Tompkins who informed me that the Hamilton and Scourge both overset and sunk in a heavy squall about two o'clock, and, distressing to relate, every soul perished except 19."

That passage really says an awful lot about what we're talking about here. This isn't simply the preservation of a heritage site, this is the preservation of the last resting place for sailors who have travelled the lakes in Ontario.

These two schooners are sitting in 300 feet of water near Port Dalhousie and they are in almost freezing water. Many marine archaeologists have stated that these two schooners are the most pristine and well-preserved specimens anywhere in the world. They are intact. Many divers have gone down and surveyed them. They were found actually in 1973 by Daniel A. Nelson. He was a St Catharines dentist who was an amateur archaeologist. He discovered these finds back in 1973, and ever since there has been a great deal of controversy because the Hamilton city council would like to see them preserved. Actually, they work towards bringing them up from their watery grave and building a museum, but the costs are so exorbitant. Now the quest becomes to preserve them in their final resting place.

The laws that currently govern the sanctuary of the Great Lakes shipwrecks like the Hamilton, the Scourge, the Edmund Fitzgerald, the Atlantic and many others are vague, and they are open to legal challenge. Given the current laws, it's probably illegal to land a submarine on the deck of any of the aforementioned wrecks, but we're not sure.

There has been an awful lot of activity around these wrecks. The province has stated they don't want anyone near these wrecks because the concern was pilferage. Things are already missing from these wrecks. There are photographs showing very clearly that there are swords

and cannonballs—these wrecks are intact, but the skeletal remains are now missing. They were found back in the 1970s, and in 1983 they were featured in a National Geographic magazine, but more recently they're missing. That leads one to believe that there are unscrupulous individuals who dove and removed the finds. It's scary that this continues.

I urge that all members in the House support this bill. It's important that we put very stiff penalties in place so these wrecks are protected for our future generations.

1040

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I too would like to wish the honourable member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant all the best as he initiates this. My riding has 60 miles of the north shore of Lake Erie in it, and we have a long marine heritage also. Many of the ports—Port Stanley, Port Burwell and Port Bruce—have had ship-building industries and fishing industries, and much tragedy has been seen within those municipalities over the years as a result of the industry on the Great Lakes.

There are some faults in this legislation that need to be addressed. First and foremost, I just want to talk a bit about your government's record on heritage. It's a record that is not positive for heritage in the long run. We've seen over \$2 million in cuts directed towards heritage over the years. As recently as last week, many heritage organizations in this province faced another 1% cut. That is going to be harmful to heritage in the long run.

I want to echo the comments of the member for Trinity-Spadina. I compliment you for initiating a separate piece of legislation, but I think the better approach would be to make this part of the Ontario Heritage Act. The Ontario Heritage Act has not been updated since 1974. It's very inadequate in many ways, in the tools it provides to municipalities and others to protect heritage sites. The Liberal government in 1989 initiated a consultation process to revise and update the Ontario Heritage Act. This process was continued through 1995 by the NDP government, with a draft release of the new Ontario Heritage Act. But that's where it stopped. It didn't go any further. I implore the members on the opposite side to take a look at the Ontario Heritage Act.

I think it's wonderful that we have this marine heritage act in front of us today, but we need to look at heritage as a whole in this province and look at how we are preserving our heritage, whether it be the archaeological sites, the natural sites, the sites that are below the water or the sites that are on land. I would much prefer to see a total review of the whole Ontario Heritage Act. I know the heritage organizations in this province would prefer that, instead of seeing an approach where we only look at specific aspects of our heritage. It's important, as we look to preserving our heritage for future generations, that we look at the whole and not just bits and pieces.

I see some problems that I'd like to pass on to the honourable member, that I would really appreciate some further investigation of. With all the cuts that have taken place in the area of heritage—I look at the work being

done by the citizenship and culture staff, out of their Centre Street office in London. Those individuals are very overworked. We will have an act in place, but are the resources going to be available to ensure the enforcement of this legislation? My concern right now is that those resources aren't available, to ensure that there's going to be adequate enforcement of the site.

The other aspect of this legislation that you need to think very seriously about is the fact that if I was a diver off Port Talbot and I discovered a wreck, I'm obligated under this legislation to notify the minister. I think that's good; we need to have these archaeological sites registered. The problem I see is that the next aspect of this legislation is that it's incumbent on the minister to publish a list of these archaeological sites. My biggest concern on publishing this list is that it's going to lead to piracy. There are going to be individuals out there who aren't going to respect this act. On a six-month basis, they're going to contact the minister's office and say, "I'm curious to see all the latest shipwrecks that have been found," and they're going to use the information that a true diver or archaeologist has done to register that site to go out early in the morning or late at night with lights and they're going to pilfer and pirate those wrecks. Those artifacts are going to be lost.

In conclusion, I want to commend the member for his efforts. But I think there are some areas that we need to look at, and I would urge you to look at encompassing this in the Ontario Heritage Act.

Mr Kormos: Before I start, I'd please ask for unanimous consent to wear this white ribbon. This is the beginning of the White Ribbon Campaign, the annual weekly event in which internationally men, by wearing the white ribbon and joining together, condemn violence by men against women and promote—

The Acting Speaker: Mr Kormos has asked unanimous consent to wear the white ribbon. Agreed? Agreed.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear a no. Shall we try it again? Is there unanimous consent for members to wear a white ribbon? I heard a no.

Mr Kormos: I'm embarrassed. I can't believe that somebody would have—

The Acting Speaker: Just remove the ribbon, please, all members. Will members remove the ribbon.

Mr Kormos: I wanted to speak to this bill and I intend to vote for it. I think the bill should go to committee. I think the bill is a valid one.

But I've got to tell you, for the first time in I suppose almost a lifetime I'm virtually speechless. As I was compelled to, and I appreciate, I came here, along with some other colleagues this morning after attending the kickoff campaign, a pancake breakfast, as part of the tradition that developed around the White Ribbon Campaign. Of course, we've commenced the process of wearing white ribbons.

This is an event that now has acquired some tradition. It's an expression by men of their repugnance for and their condemnation of, and it's a statement of men's intention to be intolerant of, violence towards women,

violence in our homes, violence in our communities, violence in this province, in this country, internationally, violence that assumes forms that are not worthy even of dignifying by referring to it. I am shocked and saddened beyond belief that an expression as modest—believe me, there's far more that we should be doing besides wearing a damned white ribbon.

When permission is sought from this chamber to wear that white ribbon as an expression of regret about and condemnation of violence towards women, when that consent is sought and not given, when there's even one member of this chamber who would—

Hon Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think we're in private members' business and we're speaking to a resolution under the name of Toby Barrett, An Act to preserve Ontario's marine heritage and promote tourism by protecting heritage wrecks and artifacts. I would ask that you enforce the standing orders with the speaker.

1050

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. The member will direct his comments to the bill before the House.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

I am disgusted by this chamber this morning. I find this chamber repugnant. I find it hard to have any respect for anything that this institution should be standing for.

Only a week ago this government stood up, and only by virtue of compulsion apologized to the women who were victimized, abused, raped—

The Acting Speaker: Speak to the bill, please.

Mr Kormos: —assaulted on a daily basis over the course of decades while they were wards of the state, and today this chamber says no—

The Acting Speaker: The member will know he should speak to the bill.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker.

This chamber now says no to a campaign against violence towards women. You disgust me.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I get a clarification, please, on the ruling that you made? Does that preclude us requesting a second time the ability to wear a ribbon?

The Acting Speaker: Are you asking for unanimous consent?

Mr Levac: I would ask for unanimous consent for the ability for us to wear the white ribbon today.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed? We have consent.

Further debate?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): First of all I would like to make it perfectly clear that I do not have any problem with anyone wearing a white ribbon this morning.

I rise today in support of this bill, sponsored by my friend from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant, the Ontario Marine Heritage Act. I certainly appreciate having the opportunity to speak to this bill this morning, because my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex borders on the Cana-

dian-American border, separated by the great water bodies of Lake St Clair, the St Clair River and Lake Huron.

I would like to quote a couple passages from Shipwrecks of Lake Huron, by Jack Parker.

"There are two Lake Huron wrecks that have been unofficially identified as the Griffon, but formal recognition has yet to be accorded to either of them. One is the ancient wreck found in the 1800s in the then gin-clear waters of Mississagi Straits"—Mr Speaker, I would imagine you would appreciate that word and that name and that location—"at the western end of Manitoulin Island in northern Lake Huron."

The other passage—and I give credit to my colleague from Bruce-Grey, because I'm sure if I didn't mention his name or his riding this morning, I would be in his books forever thereafter.

"The other wreck lies approximately 150 miles east, where ancient timbers were found in a shallow cove on Russell Island, in Georgian Bay, just off Tobermory. This wreck was found by the late Orrie Vail, a commercial fisherman from Tobermory, who remembered his father telling of such an old wreck on one of the islands near his fishing grounds. Not too much of this ship was left by the time Vail located it..."

That's what I want to seek. I would like to address three important matters that I believe are relative to this issue this morning.

The first deals with the importance of protecting these resources for their historical value. Thousands of shipwrecks litter the floor of the five Great Lakes, many of them for hundreds of years, while still others lie yet undiscovered. What is unique about these wrecks is their excellent state of preservation which, experts say, is due to the coldness of the Great Lakes waters and the relative absence of marine life.

With the increasing popularity of scuba diving and the use of advanced technologies like side scan sonar, combined with the relative shallowness of the wrecks, the sad fact is that many of our historical treasures are being systematically raped and pillaged. It is time we in Ontario followed the lead of other jurisdictions that have made wreck conservation a priority. In this regard, the state of Michigan in 1980 created nine underwater preserves, totalling nearly 1,900 square miles of Great Lakes bottomland. In Michigan, it is a felony to remove or disturb artifacts in the Great Lakes. Those caught stripping the wrecks or taking souvenirs are subject to having their boat, car and equipment confiscated, as well as having stiff fines or even prison terms imposed. The result is one of the finest sport diving locations in the Great Lakes. I would submit that it is exactly what the Ontario Marine Heritage Act seeks to duplicate.

Second, it is the importance of wreck conservation to the tourism industry, particularly in the small communities that dot the Great Lakes on the Canadian side. Lodging, campgrounds, restaurants, dive shops, charter operators and marinas can all benefit from the increased popularity of sport diving.

Finally, I'd like to address the sanctity of these wrecks as grave sites. As extreme an analogy as this might seem, imagine if you will the reaction of our citizens if vandals were allowed free access to a cemetery anywhere across this province to desecrate graves that marked the final resting place of loved ones. We would be outraged. I would challenge anyone to explain to me why shipwrecks should be considered any differently. Wrecks are the only monuments that mark the final resting place of thousands of seamen who moved goods and services and protected the people of Ontario over the last number of centuries.

In closing, it is important to our history, to our culture, to what we can learn in terms of preventing future tragedies, to the economies of small communities, tourism protection and for just the plain enjoyment of all citizens across our province.

I would be hard pressed to think of any downside in supporting this bill and I would encourage everyone in this House to give this matter your consideration.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 13, the Marine Heritage Act. I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant for bringing forward this bill to ensure that Ontarians may cherish their marine heritage resources for generations to come.

This bill is designed to protect the wrecks in our lakes—and our rivers, as one of our colleagues questioned earlier—from irresponsible explorations and pillaging. Preservation of Ontario's heritage, whether it's marine or on land, is important to all Ontarians and hopefully to this Legislature.

We have a naval and marine tradition we can be proud of. I think too often we limit our conception of marine heritage to the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. We forget about the brave sailors who traversed the Great Lakes, who fought against gales with waves as high as this entire legislative chamber to bring goods back and forth to various communities all across North America. In fact, it could be argued that our province owes its existence to the brave sailors who fought battles on these very lakes.

This bill will ensure that underwater monuments to their sacrifices are preserved. It's one way we can, as my colleague mentioned just a moment ago, demonstrate our respect for the Great Lakes mariners and the contributions they made to the growth of this province.

There was a time when you could look out over the lakes and see hundreds of ships passing. It's still a very important industry to many towns, for instance, the town of Goderich, which is in the riding where I grew up. It's now very ably represented by my colleague the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Goderich is a port actually prospering more as the years pass. Tonnes of grain and salt pass through this town's port daily and it has never forgotten its debt to the sailors of years past. There are two memorials there. The Unknown Sailor's Grave serves as a reminder of the sacrifices of generations of sailors. There is also a plaque that was erected by the Archives of Ontario, looking out

over the harbour to remember the great storm of 1913. This was a three-day storm in which 244 lives were lost in various freighters and ships that went aground or sank.

1100

Heritage is very important to this ministry and to this government. Last week, the Minister of Finance introduced legislation that will extend the tax rebate on building supplies purchased for renovations of heritage buildings. We know that we all benefit from the restoration and preservation of various buildings across the province. I'm delighted to see our interest turn today to marine vessels that are not visible to the eye for those of us on land.

This prohibits anyone who does not have a licence—and this is an important thing to note. Licences may be obtained through the ministry for entering, for removing artifacts. These licences are granted by the minister under the Ontario Heritage Act, and the fines that are to be imposed, should this legislation be passed, are in line with those that are granted under the Ontario Heritage Act.

I would like to close by saying that I think this is very important legislation. It has my wholehearted support. I would urge all members to join with me in supporting this legislation.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm certainly pleased to join in the debate with respect to a bill that would create a new act, the Ontario Marine Heritage Act, 1999.

I would just like to offer a historical context to this debate, because certainly the member has indicated what he's trying to accomplish here in terms of the historical past.

I want to read a passage here. It's called Gateway to Oblivion: The Great Lakes Bermuda Triangle, by Hugh F. Cochrane. I'll just read a passage from that.

"It is a strange place where ships, planes and people vanish into thin air, where weird fogs and globes of light abound, where ominous waters shroud sinister events. It is a place where eerie, negative emissions have gripped psychics and bizarre UFO events astound researchers. It is an enigma with a 200-year history of disasters that have drained insurance companies of millions of dollars in claims and set records for mysterious events that pale the famed Bermuda Triangle. Ship losses alone number in the thousands, yet authorities refuse to discuss the matter openly.

"Where is this realm of suspended reality? It is not in a remote corner of the earth. It is located right here in the middle of the North American heartland, the region known as the Great Lakes."

Certainly, we have a member here who is looking to do something about this. I think, in the historical context, it's about time.

I'd also like to read another passage, from Shipwrecks of the Lakes by Dana Thomas Bowen. It says:

"Voyages upon the Great Lakes are unsurpassed anywhere. The ports of call are usually large cities, most of them having their beginnings from the lake trade. The

great open stretches of fresh water are exhilarating, invigorating and, at the same time, restful. Travel the Great Lakes and enjoy for yourself the interesting experiences that await you.

"For any writer to attempt to put into a single book details of all the shipwrecks of the Great Lakes is sheer folly. Even if it might be possible to obtain or compile just a listing of the names of the wrecked ships with dates, locations and causes, it is doubtful that it could be condensed into a single, usable book."

I think what we're trying to deal with here is to put this into a historical context. Something needs to be done, and I think the member has accomplished this.

Mr Barrett: I wish to thank all the members who have spoken this morning, representing the interests of their various lakes, certainly Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Lake Huron and Lake Superior. My neighbours to the west on Lake Erie, both the member for Essex and the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, covered the North Shore very well.

To the member for Essex, I just wish to clarify that the licensing system already is in place. The reality is that many of the wrecks the member for Essex speaks of are already dive sites. Many have been stripped clean, unfortunately, and they would be exempted from these regulations. That's why we are giving the minister that ability. The licence is for marine archaeology, not merely to dive or explore.

Member for Trinity-Spadina, thank you for your comments, and yes indeed we did draw on the previous consultation that was done by the ministry in drafting this legislation. I also point out that the legislation does cover rivers in Ontario, submerged vessels or partially submerged vessels if they are on crown land and if they are abandoned.

The member for Guelph-Wellington mentioned the big storm of 1913. That storm was on November 11. We know the expression "the gales of November," a quote from a song by Gordon Lightfoot. So many of these disastrous storms occurred in November, certainly the Edmund Fitzgerald. There was a terrible Armistice Day storm in 1940, and on November 30, 1905, 10 ships went down.

In memory of these lives lost, I ask you to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: We will deal with this matter again at 12 noon.

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm very pleased today to introduce my private member's resolution on access to trades and professions. In the House today are a number of associations and members of associations who have a direct—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): You need to read the resolution into the record first.

Mr Ruprecht: This will take away from my time to speak. Can I ask to forgo this, if possible?

The Acting Speaker: Your time doesn't begin until after you've read the actual resolution.

Mr Ruprecht: I'm delighted to read the resolution to the House. It reads as follows:

"That individuals have the opportunity to seek licensure or certification in professions and trades for which they have been trained, in the context of provincial human resource planning, and without additional barriers not faced by Ontario-trained individuals;

"That full information on the licensing/certification standards and appeal processes of licensing and occupational bodies be available and accessible;

"That any competency assessment of licensure/certification requirements be based on criteria relevant to performing adequately in the profession or trade;

"That candidates be provided with written reasons for denial of an application or appeal for certification or licensure in a trade or profession;

"That individuals have access to training opportunities when upgrade training would allow Ontario competency standards to be reached, based on occupational demand and financial feasibility; and

"That all self-governing occupational licensing bodies provide internal appeal processes which are sensitive to such matters as timelines and access to information, whereby decisions of licensing bodies can be objectively reviewed by staff other than those conducting initial assessment."

I am delighted today to introduce my private member's resolution on access to trades and professions, but first I would like to introduce some members of associations who are here today who have a direct stake in the system.

The organizations that are here today are as follows: The Association of Filipino-Canadian Accountants; the Filipino Dental Association; the New Canadian Forum on Access to Trades and Professions; Skills for Change; the Coalition for Access to Professional Engineering; the Ontario Network for Access to Professions and Trades; the Organization in Support of International Veterinarians in Canada; the Foreign-Trained Doctors' Association; and the Filipino Labour Attaché.

I recommend the passage of this resolution and here is why: Our parents, grandparents or in some cases great-great-grandparents came to this country to find a better life. They succeeded essentially because they had access to or were able to continue their professional life in Canada.

Then, of course, they come to this country, as it happens today, and they try to enter their profession. In this case, let's say they're physicians. The recommendation from the physicians would be, "Sorry, there are no internship programs," even though they've passed all the necessary examinations. In the case of veterinarians, there would be exorbitant fees and other barriers. We could go on and on, but I just say that when Ms Bassett was Minister of Citizenship, she said, and I quote, "In this field of access to trades and professions there is no standard or consistent methodologies." The conclusion is

that this system is not adequate. That's the conclusion of your former Minister of Citizenship.

1110

The report *Access to Trades and Professions* in Ontario is 10 years old. We all have a copy and we all see those recommendations.

What did this report find? It found, and I quote directly from the report, "These barriers to access are systemic, generally applicable to most occupations and rooted in the practice of self-governing bodies." It says, "Only a few professions are free from discriminatory practices." That is the conclusion of the report. It's a non-partisan report; it isn't Conservative, NDP or Liberal.

Let's look at another report, *Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration*, March 1998, just last year. It says, "Many licensing bodies have used their role as protectors of the health and safety of consumers as a guise to protect the interests of their members through exclusionary entrance requirements."

Let's see what Harish Jain says, Canadian human rights tribunal and professor at McMaster University. In 1996 he said, "This government has given the licensing bodies the power and they're using that power to exclude." Peter Cumming, Ontario Court justice, law professor at Osgoode Hall, chair of the Task Force on Access to Professions and Trades, is quoted as saying in the *Hamilton Spectator*, "Widespread and generalized practices which are discriminatory are evident in terms of trades and professions."

The conclusions are obvious, yet at the same time we are mindful of the necessity that this brain drain in Canada should stop because we need foreign-trained professionals. They come to Canada and are told: "Because you have a high standard of education and are a professional, we are giving you extra points to you come to Canada." However, when they then enter this country and try to enter their profession or trade, the door is shut.

Requirements are above the norm, and as I have just read, recommendation after recommendation, some of these bodies are very exclusionary. That means a lot of foreign-trained physicians, accountants, veterinarians, professionals, whether they're technicians or tradesmen or tradeswomen, are being used in menial jobs as a brain drain, menial jobs such as gas station attendants, pizza delivery persons or even restaurant cleaners. In some cases it boggles the mind.

Let me tell you what it says here in a quote from the veterinarians. They're also crying out. In terms of the physicians in rural areas, we know there's a big hue and cry, and we say, "Come, we need you here." But in terms of the veterinarians, we have another hue and cry. Let me read to you from their report, "The association started out this year with four priorities," and what are they? The top priority of the veterinarians in Canada is "the shortage of rural practitioners."

Here we have a number of them with us trying to enter the profession of veterinarian and they can't enter. In this case, we have some people here who have been practising, from Ukraine, Israel, Germany, Britain. They have

been practising their trade and their profession for years, and they come to Canada and we say no. In the meantime, the priority of veterinarians in this country is the shortage of rural practitioners. They say, "This is an ongoing issue that is not only of provincial importance, but also nationally," and they conclude, "even internationally."

What we're doing today by not permitting them to enter the profession is really a crime in terms of an economic issue. This is not only an issue of social justice, this is also an issue of economic participation. One thing we pride ourselves on as Canadians is we say our system is fair, it is just, it is open. If that's our proposition, if that's what it means to be a Canadian, then we have to act today. That's why I recommend to all of us to try to ensure that we do some justice not only to those who are present today but to those who will be here again next year and the following year and the following year. We know that people are only working right now to make a living, and that's why it's very important that we open up the system.

Finally, let me simply say this: As you consider voting for this resolution, I would like to remind you that this issue of those who are present with us today is an issue also of livelihood. People have to raise a family. People come to this country because they believe in opportunity. They don't wish to be told that it's the municipal level that's at fault, or it's the provincial level that's at fault, or it's the federal level, or that we don't have our act together.

I simply say to you today, please remember that we're dealing with human lives, we're dealing with justice, we're dealing with opportunity, and I, as a Canadian, would like to open up the system, as that you do as well, to those who are not only in need but who may be able in a real sense to help the economic development of our country. In the end, I think that is just as important as being able to make a living on an individual basis. Consequently, I urge all of the members to support this resolution and I thank you for it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A succession of governments have considered this matter, have prepared the reports, have done the studies, and yes, that same succession of governments have failed to act upon the information that's put before them.

Clearly New Democrats are going to be supporting this resolution, and I hope it's unanimous support for this resolution to make it clear that this chamber finally, once and for all, is saying, yes, it's time to move along from the reports to action.

My regret is that not only do we have to address this, because it should have been done a long time ago, but my other regret is what has motivated the failure to act. I put to you very bluntly that no matter how much we would like to wish other about ourselves, this is a manifestation, quite frankly, of racism, xenophobia and some bizarre ethnocentrism. The fact remains that there are hundreds and thousands of those people in this province alone, in

my own community, from across the world, trained in universities that have histories far longer than our Confederation, never mind our own universities, who are members and were practitioners of trades and professions in their countries of origin that have professional traditions going back not just a century but century after century.

1120

Not only, as has been noted, is the doctor shortage a rural phenomenon; it's an urban phenomenon as well. In the Niagara region, like so many other urban areas, we have a shortage of at least 100 doctors. It's even more acute in the rural parts of Ontario. If your doctor ceases to practise, retires or passes away, you literally can't get a new doctor. There are hundreds of trained, experienced doctors, who have taught in universities, who have specialties and who have great experience in those areas of specialty who, as has been noted, are driving taxis and cleaning hotel rooms. By no means do I diminish those jobs that hard-working people do in this and every country. But for us to express concern about a doctor shortage and not take advantage of the fact that there are at least hundreds and probably thousands of trained, experienced, qualified medical practitioners sitting idle in this country is a crime.

It's a crime to our communities that cry out for those medical services, and it's a crime against those women and men who, when they came to Canada, thought they came to a country that was democratic, that was open and that was accepting, that celebrated diversity. I have to mention Claire Gerencser, of the Welland Heritage Council, who worked with the Foreign-Trained Doctors' Association and facilitated my meeting with them, I think a year or a year and a half ago. I met many of these doctors, women and men, just an incredible variety of disciplines that they came from within the medical profession.

They also bring with them experience and training that many times is distinct and unique to the medical cultures of their country. Please, Ontario Medical Association, don't start calling and writing, but I have a suspicion that the theme of medical practice in this country tends to be very much pharmaceutically driven. The pharmaceutical industry drives the nature of our medical practice. I say that, not being a doctor and subject to whatever criticism might flow. But the fact is there are many medical cultures internationally, which aren't necessarily pharmaceutically driven, which have styles of treatment that vary and are certainly as effective and, quite frankly, in many cases have withstood an even longer test of time than this North American pharmaceutically driven medical culture.

These are also people who bring with them their mother tongue. These are people who can reach out to other members of their own mother cultural community and serve and accommodate them in their own language and in a manner in which they perhaps feel more comfortable. I say it's a crime that we have ignored this incredible resource. It's also unfortunate and more than regrettable, and it should be a source of some shame, that

the motivation is in no small part one of racism. I say that being so well aware that we—let me put—white Anglo-Canadians like to think of ourselves as so, dare I say, liberal—I won't—but oh so accepting of multiculturalism. I'm afraid the experience betrays that sense of ourselves. When I speak of ethnocentric, I talk about the fact that we seem to think that only our universities and our regulatory bodies can establish adequate standards. I beg to disagree. I put to you that the professionals and tradespeople about which this resolution speaks are as well trained and as well qualified, and I put to you that in many cases they could well be better trained and better qualified by virtue of having met the standards of the regulatory bodies and the professional and educational standards in their homelands.

I think this Legislature is compelled to unanimously support this resolution, to talk about and to address and to acknowledge the great wealth of skills that new Canadians bring to this country from across the world, not just western Europe, not just eastern Europe, but from Asia and Africa and Central and South America. I say that we all become stronger and our communities become healthier and our buildings become safer and our prosperity is encouraged once we break down the barriers to recognition of the trade and professional qualifications of the people spoken to in this resolution. Unanimous support is the only response that can be given to this resolution.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I remind our guests in the galleries that any applause or any act is not permitted.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I rise today to speak to the resolution put before this House by the member from Davenport. As Ontario's economy continues to grow and create new jobs, our need for skilled workers grows too. I'd like to welcome the members in the gallery today, as well, for joining us.

Our government is committed to meeting this need by ensuring that our province has a skilled workforce that will prosper in the modern economy. Facts show that more than half of all immigrants who come to Canada choose to live in Ontario. My government firmly believes that our province prospers when new Ontarians from around the world, as well as elsewhere in Canada, are able to contribute their skills and expertise to our economy.

While I must commend the member from Davenport for seeing the great potential of skilled newcomers, I must also point out that his party leader's official vision is not as clear. On March 24 this year, in fact, the Liberal leader issued a press release on this issue. In the very first paragraph, Dalton McGuinty called the recognition of foreign skills his top priority for involving Ontarians in the economy. Unfortunately for newcomers, the first Liberal proposal was, "Moving responsibility for improving access to trades and professions from the Minister of Citizenship to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade."

On this side of the House, we know that solving this problem takes more than reorganization of bureaucrats

and printing new letterhead. We must take action to ensure that the potential that skilled newcomers bring to Ontario is not wasted. That is why our government has taken firm steps to deal with this issue. We have sought proposals to create an academic credentials assessment service that will help newcomers to Ontario by quickly and fairly evaluating their foreign credentials. This service will set standards for recognizing foreign credentials and eliminate the inconsistencies and disorganization that often faces skilled newcomers today. With over 180 countries with different educational systems, it is important that the accepted proposal for the creation of the academic credentials assessment service will provide fair, accurate and consistent assessment for foreign secondary and post-secondary educational qualifications.

1130

Working in partnership with occupational regulatory bodies, we have developed fact sheets that outline specifically what qualifications newcomers need to practise trades in Ontario. The fact sheets are made available at visa offices worldwide and on the Internet and help immigrants prepare to work in Ontario before they ever arrive.

We support merit-based evaluation of certain skills to ensure that competence is fairly and rigorously proven.

This government also understands that some newcomers may sometimes need to upgrade existing skills or learn new ones to become certified to practise their trade or profession in Ontario.

Through our commitment to a skilled workforce and lifelong learning, we are expanding training opportunities for all Ontarians, no matter how long they have lived here or how much training they may need.

Bill 55, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, introduced by this government, brings flexibility and market responsiveness to the apprenticeship system so that we can train even more Ontarians for increasingly sophisticated trades.

We are expanding the Ontario youth apprenticeship program to help young Ontarians make an easier transition from school to work.

Despite record participation rates in our colleges and universities, most Ontarians do not go on immediately to post-secondary education. We are working hard to ensure that they are ready to take part in Ontario's economic growth and are not left behind their peers in colleges and universities.

If the member for Davenport is sincerely interested in helping Ontario workers learn new skills, he should take some time to tell his federal Liberal colleagues how important it is that the federal government sign a labour market development agreement with Ontario, as the Prime Minister promised.

The federal government called a pause in the negotiations. The new Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, who is responsible for this area, has continuously tried to get the federal Minister of Human Resources Development Canada to come back to the table to con-

tinue the negotiations to complete this agreement. As of today it's still not happening.

With the devolution of training and fair funding, we can integrate today's two-tier system of federal and provincial programs and reinvest the savings into serving even more Ontarians.

Ontario employers will benefit from the signing of this agreement, as they will be able to get more skilled workers to keep pace with global competition.

Ontario workers will also benefit from fair funding of training programs that will allow them to upgrade their skills, obtain better jobs in a growing, changing economy, and ultimately better provide for their families.

Overall, this government will never stop looking for ways to improve opportunities for Ontarians to train, retrain and upgrade their skills to prosper in the new economy.

In conclusion, while I must commend the honourable member for foresight well beyond his party, I must also inform him that we are already well on our way to addressing the issues raised in this resolution.

This government has done more to improve access to professions and trades for newcomers than any other in Ontario's history. So I must stand against the resolution put forward by the member for Davenport. The government's principles on this issue are already very clear.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It's a pleasure for me to rise today in support of this very important motion. I want to start by congratulating my colleague Tony Ruprecht for his work, not only on this resolution but also for his many years of work and commitment to improving access to trades and professions here in our province.

Make no mistake, the issue of improved access to trades and professions is not a social issue; it's an important economic issue. As a province, we can no longer afford the luxury of leaving highly trained and experienced professionals sitting on the sidelines. We need their help. We need their help because Ontario can only reach its full economic potential when we have the full participation of already qualified, internationally trained individuals in our workforce.

When it comes right down to it, it's a matter of our collective self-interest. If people trained in other jurisdictions throughout the world, at the expense of other taxpayers, find themselves here in our province and they are not living up to their full employment potential, that is our collective loss. If these people do well here, if they find room at the employment table, we do well. We enjoy the benefits as well.

Last week Tony Ruprecht and I held a round table with many foreign-trained professionals. The personal stories we heard were very compelling. I was able to hear first hand about many of the unfair barriers faced by people who want to work in their areas of expertise.

I was able to hear from a doctor who received his medical training in the former Soviet Union, a doctor who had delivered over 1,000 babies, but who here today in Ontario simply cannot afford to write our tests. This man's talents are being wasted. At the same time, I might

add, we have close to 100 Ontario communities which are going underserved, where thousands and thousands of Ontario families can no longer get access to a family doctor.

We were also able to hear last week from an engineer who was responsible for the quality control of materials that were used to build two large dam projects in Iraq. In fact, as I recall, she was responsible for the quality control over a highway that extended some 1,000 kilometres in length. Today this woman is in Ontario and she is forced to work as a lower-paid technologist because her extensive experience has been completely ignored by everyone but her co-workers, who go to her when they need good advice.

Over the years, I've heard from a lot of people affected by this issue. Not once has anybody ever said to me: "The problem with Ontario is that your standards are too high. We want you to lower your standards." Nobody has ever said that. All they're saying is: "We want to be able to make a contribution. We want to make of ourselves and our families in this province, in our new home, a success. We want to contribute to the strength of your economy." We think that's a fair request. We think we should do whatever we reasonably can to ensure that these people can make their contribution.

As I said earlier, today in Ontario we've got communities that are begging for doctors, yet we continue to force foreign-trained doctors to work as cab drivers. That's a terrible waste. We have a huge nursing shortage, yet we refuse to let nurses trained in other jurisdictions help us meet the needs of our patients here in Ontario. That's a disgrace.

While the steps contained in this motion will go a long way to improving access, what we really need in Ontario, what would truly and deeply make a difference, would be a Premier who is willing to make this a priority issue. That's something that we will continue to work on, day in and day out. I want to tell you for the record, for all Ontarians to hear, but particularly a message that I want to send to our foreign-trained skilled and professional people who have graced us with their presence in our province today, that we will work ceaselessly and tirelessly on this issue, because when it comes right down to it, if you are doing well, our province is doing well. It is in the interests of my children that you find room at the employment table. We will not give up on that front until we have found success for ourselves and our foreign-trained skilled and professional people.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I would like to address the House with respect to this very important issue that has been raised by the member for Davenport.

I must say that we on this side certainly support the principle of foreign-trained individuals, no matter what their profession, coming to this great province and contributing to the growth of this province.

1140

With respect to the resolution, it is interesting to note that the leader of the official opposition has stood up.

This was part of his election campaign. He had a flyer that went around during the election campaign. The resolution almost comes word for word from that resolution.

Before I get into the very few moments that I do have with respect to the resolution, I would ask that the leader of the official opposition use whatever influence he has with respect to talking to his counterparts in Ottawa. One of the concerns that we have is that the federal government's percentage of additional training of individuals, whether foreign- or native-born Canadians, comes from employment insurance premiums. That is the main source of funding for training in the employment programs, not only in Ontario, but across the country. The federal government has offered Ontarians about 28% of the federal funding for the labour market programs while Ontarians contribute more than 40% of the employment insurance premiums.

I emphasize that. I'm not federal-bashing; I'm genuinely concerned about the amount of money that is something like—there's a surplus in the employment insurance fund of about \$25 billion that's not needed. They can put that money into training, no matter whether you're foreign-trained or whether you're native-trained, with respect to the jobs and professions in this province.

The resolution doesn't go as far as what the leader of the official opposition says. It's very general in its terminology with respect to training. We in Ontario have tried to eliminate the barriers across the province with respect to non-Ontario-trained people wanting to move to other provinces or people from other provinces wanting to come here. The member may not be aware that there was a social union that was agreed to by the federal and provincial governments, in February of this year, which committed the governments to ensure full compliance with the mobility provisions of the agreement on internal trade. That includes the requirements for mutual recognition of occupational qualifications and for the eliminating of residency requirements for access to employment. This is in the works, so that the provinces and the federal government have gotten together with this issue and have asked professional associations, unions and educational training establishments to comply with these provisions. That is with respect to the internal part of it.

With respect to the foreign-trained individuals, that's a genuine concern. Certainly we want to encourage foreign-trained individuals to come to this province, but at the same time, we have standards that must be met. If they meet those standards, we welcome them. If they don't meet those standards, we encourage training that would enable them to do whatever profession or trade they can in their other country in this country.

One of the questions—and I have very limited time to speak on this—that I am specifically concerned with is the issue of the appeal process. I have great faith in the self-regulatory bodies that we've worked hard to put forward in this province. I have great faith in the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Law Society of Upper

Canada, the engineers, the accountants, and it goes on and on—all of those professions.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: Members of the Liberal Party, if you want to criticize those colleges and those professions, you go to it. You do that. You tell them to their face that you don't have faith in those professions. I wish you well.

The resolution seems to be talking about some independent form of an appeal. In many of these professions you write an exam, and you pass the exam or you fail the exam. If you fail the exam, you have to write it again; you may have to take more training. Hence some of the issues that the government is now getting into apply, or the individual colleges or organizations will provide training. That's a test of life: You pass an exam or you fail an exam; you meet the requirements or you don't meet the requirements. It's as simple as that.

I guess the other question is, they talk about an independent process, that these organizations aren't independent enough. It's almost as if they're suggesting some human rights issue. In fact, I think the leader of the official opposition referred to that in his comments this morning. We have a Human Rights Commission.

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: The member for Kingston and the Islands laughs at the Human Rights Commission. Good luck to him for laughing at the Human Rights Commission. Quite frankly, if someone's human rights are being violated—no matter if you're a landed immigrant or you live in this province, we have rights and those rights are being defended, and they're being defended by the Human Rights Commission.

What we're talking about is, are the standards of this province being met? I guess the question is, who's going to pay for that? Are we suggesting that the government provide an independent appeal process for every college, for every independent professional organization and we build up a bureaucracy that's going to pay for that? Is that what they're suggesting? Is that what the resolution is suggesting? I ask the member for Davenport to clarify that with respect to his comments.

We as a government have always encouraged these organizations to self-regulate and to keep their own counsel. To interfere with that would go against what we've achieved in this area. Most of the regulations for certification and licensing are based on exam testing and education. As I said, either someone is able to meet those standards set by these qualified exams or they're not. The process of the appeal is the ability to retake the courses or retake the exams. Even then, even after that, most of the professions and colleges have an appeal process. These standards in most cases apply to Ontario-trained individuals as well.

Those are the hesitations I have with respect to this resolution.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I only have a very few minutes. Let me first of all say that the government members just don't get it. This is not a partisan issue. Yes, perhaps the federal government

should be doing more, but what you should be doing is going after each and every cabinet minister who has the responsibility for one of these boards, agencies and licensing committees and make sure they deal with these applications quickly and speedily.

I can tell you of one situation with respect to a foreign-trained doctor who has passed all the necessary Canadian Medical Association exams, who has the experience we want and need in this country, who has the academic and educational qualifications, and he has to wait 11 months to write the Ontario exams. We have a shortage of doctors and we don't take advantage of this? No.

What we ought to do is to make sure each and every government department that is involved in one of these areas gets together with their self-regulating bodies and asks them and works with them: How can we improve the appeal process? How can we improve the speed of the appeal process and the speed of the applications of the foreign-trained individuals? That's what this is all about. It's as simple as that.

All that these people want are the same opportunities that many of us have had in this country. They've got the qualifications and we ought to be taking advantage of those qualifications, particularly in those areas where we have a shortage.

This country is a country of immigrants. I'm an immigrant. Many of the people in this House are immigrants. We want to make sure that the immigrants, who are looking for exactly the same thing that you and I and our forefathers looked for, which is a land of opportunity for ourselves and for our children, have that opportunity.

Anything we can do to speed up that process and where government can get involved to get these agencies to move on this, that's what we should be applauding. We shouldn't be casting blame on the federal government or on some other level of government. Do what you can in this House and within your own jurisdiction to make sure this problem gets corrected as soon as possible.

1150

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): No political party on this issue can afford to pretend to be pure, because we have all failed these communities. Liberals in the past, New Democrats when we followed them, Tories and the federal Liberal government have all failed you. I want to tell you that I'm a big part—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker: Just a moment. I would again remind the galleries that any kind of demonstration, applause or otherwise, is not permitted in here. Thank you.

The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to say that I take responsibility for that failure as well. We could have done something other than some mere demonstration projects that we did while we were in government. It wasn't enough. It was wrong. We had the report that the Liberals had, Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario, and we didn't act on it in the way

that governments should. That's the failure of political parties.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Why is that?

Mr Marchese: There were many reasons; I wish I had the time.

But now that you have the wheels, the limousine and the cards to be able to enjoy yourselves, maybe you can explain to them, as you have, and I'll get to that. The problem is, all levels of government have failed our linguistic and racial communities and we continue to do it.

I heard the member for Thornhill use the words "merit-based evaluations." That is code for keeping the barriers up so that these people don't have the jobs they're looking for. It's code for maintaining the discriminatory systems that our regulatory bodies have in place, of which the member for Dufferin-Peel says, "I have trust in them." Then he argues, "But if we don't have trust in them, we have the Ontario Human Rights Commission that these people could go to in the event of discrimination."

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Come on, you're making fun of him.

Mr Marchese: That's exactly what he said.

Discrimination is here in this province and it's in Canada. By the way, you should know these Tories have cut the Ontario Human Rights Commission by \$700,000 in the past and they have cut it again, and they will continue to cut it as much as they possibly can. You know that when you take a complaint to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, if you're brave enough to take a complaint and have the fortitude and the money and the stamina, it might take you three to five years to solve your problem, if you have the courage to stick with it. But the member for Dufferin-Peel and this government say, "Oh, but we have the Human Rights Commission; we're all equal," and if somehow there is discrimination that you're facing, you can go to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and there you will find retribution and redress. You know that is not true. That's what we're talking about.

We're talking about an issue of human rights. We know that these people have a great deal of cultural capital to bring. They bring their professions with them and the spirit of those professions should give them access to jobs. We know there's a shortage of doctors, but that's not why you should be getting there to practise. You should be there to practise because you have the skills, and not use the argument that we have a shortage of doctors as a reason why you should be. The skills are there.

Speaking of red tape, which this government is very fond of talking about, I've got to tell you they've brought documents and documents of, "We are cutting red tape." The government members, who are not listening, will know that they're fond of cutting red tape. Here's Dr Aberman, the dean of medicine at the University of Toronto: "Under current regulatory rules, he would not have immediately qualified to practise here when he

returned from the United States as an intensive care unit specialist.

"I and the majority of my clinical chairs would not have been able to practise," he says.

"Aberman, who has been at U of T since 1973, uses this example to demonstrate the degree of regulatory barriers faced by doctors, trained overseas and in the US...."

He says: "There are so many regulatory hoops ... you can't imagine ... There's red tape and high barriers...." This is Dr Aberman, the dean of the University of Toronto.

These Tories will tell you, "We love to cut red tape, except when it comes to your rights."

That's why I say to you, exercise your political rights. Get involved politically because you can bring these people down, and any government that doesn't address your human rights and the cultural capital that you have, that you brought here wishing to be able to extend those benefits that you have and that you want to share with us.

We are left with community organizations like Culturelink and Skills for Change to advocate on your behalf. It should be up to the government members to advocate on your behalf, not unfunded or little-funded organizations.

Imagine, Joan Kent, an employment counsellor at Culturelink's Toronto settlement agency for newcomers, says that she regularly advises her very qualified professional clients to dumb down their resumé to get their first jobs. Imagine, people with skills have to dumb down their skills in order to get a job because they're not qualified enough to be doctors or chemical engineers or veterinarians or whatever they might be. They've got to dumb down their skills to be able to get some pizza job somewhere. As my colleague from Niagara Centre said, not to diminish the work that those people do, but you were trained for other things.

I urge you, exercise your political rights because you have them, and your vote is the most important way to express your dissatisfaction with any government. As we support these measures through this resolution, that is moving in the right direction.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'd like to briefly add my strong support for the resolution. There are literally tens of thousands of extremely talented people here in Ontario who don't have an opportunity to contribute fully. It is well proven, without a shadow of a doubt. We worry about the brain drain to the US and at the same time we have enormous brain power sitting idly, not being able to perform the task they are adequately and purposely trained for.

It's in all of our interests to strongly support this resolution, to take advantage of these enormous strengths and to get on with building Ontario by using every single individual to the maximum of their potential. Other countries have trained and developed these people. We need their talents. Simply by passing this resolution, we will move forward in accomplishing that.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very pleased to add to the debate today in support of my colleague Tony Ruprecht in bringing forward this resolution.

In my community, which is the second if not third city that attracts the most new Canadians, we have a huge community of individuals who arrive from all over the world. In our office we find many examples of skills and trades that are simply not being used by our community. I would very strongly urge the government members to support this.

In particular, I think of a friend of mine, Roberto Gonzales, who is now working in the medical field. I would like on record in Hansard to call him Dr Roberto Gonzales because that's what he is, a practising family doctor in his home country, who is now not engaged in that work here in Canada as he should be.

The barriers are there; the barriers are systemic. Some of the solutions for some of the trades are so simple. It's just absolutely bizarre that the government has not acted on this sooner.

On behalf of all those who are working diligently in my community to solve these problems, I would say to you, the government members, to be much more diligent in urging your ministries to act in this area.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I also rise in full support of the resolution put forward by my colleague. I particularly want to speak to the issue of easing the restrictions on the licensing of foreign-trained physicians. I want to commend Mr Ruprecht for particularly the first part of his resolution, in which he says that there should be an equal "opportunity to seek licensure or certification in professions" or fields for which individuals are "trained, in the context of human resource planning, and without additional barriers not faced by Ontario-trained individuals."

1200

That is exactly what the Liberal caucus has proposed for the licensing of additional family practitioners who have been trained outside of Canada. The opportunity for foreign-trained physicians to obtain a licence to practise medicine in Ontario has been particularly limited since the early 1980s, when the Ontario government at that point tried to totally restrict any foreign-trained physician from obtaining a licence to practise in this province. It was challenged successfully in court. The Ministry of Health was then forced to provide 24 residency spots for individuals who had not received their medical training in Canada; 24 positions to provide the training to qualify to practise in Ontario in all fields of medicine for foreign-trained physicians, including family practice. There are 200 to 250 individuals who apply every year for those 24 slots. That gives you some indication of just how restrictive these residency positions are.

The limitations on foreign-trained physicians practising in Ontario were put in place in the early 1980s in an attempt to control the escalating costs of OHIP, in the belief people had that somehow we were overserved for physicians, and that therefore we could reduce the num-

ber of physicians and reduce the increasing costs of OHIP billings. That seemed to ignore the concern about future population growth, because the government of the later day also took further steps of reducing medical school enrolment by 15%.

Most of us would now agree that the result of those two steps is that we have a significant shortage of physicians in Ontario. It's a little difficult to persuade the Minister of Health and this government that indeed we have a supply problem, but most of us who see the fact that we have 99 communities that are underserved for family practice alone would believe that we have a shortage of physicians.

I would point out that it is particularly difficult to get a specialist licence in Canada, as the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons requires that all the residency training for specialists be done in Canada. The Ontario Medical Association, the Ontario College of Family Physicians, recognizing that there is indeed a shortage, agree that there should be a lessening of these restrictions on foreign-trained physicians obtaining a licence.

We would encourage the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons to deal with these issues of restricted licences, to bring forward recommendations as expeditiously as possible in order to address what are real shortages of physicians.

No one is suggesting a lowering of standards. Mr Ruprecht's resolution makes that quite clear. Dr Wexler of the OMA is quoted as saying that we have to make sure that doctors, whether they are trained in Canada or anywhere else, meet our standard of training, examination and skills. We agree, and that's what this resolution says.

It also says that the opportunities to be licensed should be made available within human resource planning. No one is suggesting we go out recruiting and flood the physician market with an oversupply of foreign-trained physicians. What we are suggesting, quite simply, is that more opportunities can be provided to trained physicians now resident in Ontario communities to obtain a licence to practise here. There should be more residency positions open for foreign-trained physicians, far more than the 24 that now exist.

Moreover, we believe that foreign-trained family physicians could be given community-based residency positions, along the lines of the model that's been proposed by the Ontario College of Family Physicians in Ontario. That model would ensure that only qualified people enter such a residency and that they're in a supervised residency position until they are fully qualified to practise in Ontario. These fully trained people could be providing a needed service to patients in our communities within a matter of months. They would enter community-sponsored residencies in communities that are underserved and desperately need this service now.

We have not suggested that we license more foreign-trained physicians at the expense of training opportunities for Canadian students. We have recommended increasing the number of medical school spots back to the levels

that existed before 1993. We are as many as 700 family physicians short in communities across this province. Surely there is room for a responsible expansion of both medical school spaces in our Ontario schools and residency opportunities for foreign-trained physicians.

Until this government recognizes that there is indeed a problem with an undersupply of physicians, there will continue to be a refusal to deal with the supply issue and unfortunately there will not be any movement on easing the restrictions on foreign-trained physicians.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: First of all, I want to thank the members for responding and for making their comments.

I am specifically interested in the comments that were made by the member from Thornhill, because she talked about merit-based evaluation. The member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey said, "If only they had the standards, things would be OK." That point was already addressed, friends, by the leader of the Liberal Party. Nobody is suggesting lowering the standards. In fact, the associations here today are telling us they could even raise the standards because they've had experience back home.

Please, get this right. We're not here to confront you today. This is not a confrontation. We're saying to you that the Minister of Citizenship herself has agreed there's a problem. She says: "As a society, we have not gone far enough to accommodate people who come here seeking to use the skills they used and developed in their countries. We have not gone far enough."

Therefore, if we haven't gone far enough, let's stop blaming the municipalities. Let's stop blaming the federal government. The solution to this problem is here.

Consequently, I urge you to please try to remember there are lives at stake as well; not only a brain drain, not only a question of making a living, not only a question of participation, but lives are at stake because people wish to participate. Today, it is incumbent upon us to remember this.

You have a vote, and I know that some of you on the Conservative side have seen the light and will support this resolution. I want to thank you for it, because you've gone beyond the banter of party politics. I want to thank you and congratulate you.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the allotted time.

ONTARIO MARINE HERITAGE ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE PATRIMOINE MARIN DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 5.

Mr Barrett has moved second reading of Bill 13. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I wish to make a motion that this bill be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that this goes to the standing committee on general government? Agreed.

PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item 6.

Mr Ruprecht has moved private member's resolution 6. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1208 to 1213.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Ruprecht's resolution will stand.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick
Beaubien, Marcel
Bisson, Gilles
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce

Curling, Alvin
DeFaria, Carl
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Brenda
Gerretsen, John
Kennedy, Gerard
Klees, Frank
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Marland, Margaret
Mazzilli, Frank
McGuinty, Dalton

McLeod, Lyn
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Skarica, Toni
Smitherman, George
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Wetlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 0.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' public business having now been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1332.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are two items that are of great interest to members of this assembly. The first is the price of gasoline. It's certainly of interest to my constituents. They all know that I have presented, to this Legislature, Bill 16, An Act respecting the price of gasoline.

What does this bill do? First of all, it calls the bluff of the government because it's strictly within the purview of the Ontario government. Mike Harris, who is so bombastic in his description of the oil barons of this province—he didn't call them that; he said the oil companies—of

course said he would point to the federal government. I have something he can do himself.

He can pass this bill. I would be very co-operative in seeing this bill passed, all three readings in one day; it only takes two readings in this case. What does it do? It prohibits the large oil companies, the oil barons themselves, from selling the price of their gasoline wholesale at one price to their own retailers and at another to independents. It helps to preserve those independents.

I well recall when Premier Bill Davis in 1975 invoked an act which froze the price of gasoline and heating oil at that time. He recognized it was fully within the jurisdiction of the provincial government.

I'm sure there are people across this province who would want to see these two bills, the bill of my colleague Mr Colle and mine, enacted by this Legislature. May I assure the government of my full co-operation and that of my party in expediting these two very progressive pieces of legislation through this House.

GREY CUP

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I'm rising today to bring to the attention of all members of the House a race between the two provinces in Canada with the most booming economies, Alberta and Ontario.

As you are all aware, these two provinces are currently involved in a neck-and-neck competition as to who can ultimately attain the lowest tax rate in Canada. However, another battle is about to take place, the 87th annual Grey Cup between the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the Calgary Stampeders to be held on Sunday in Vancouver, BC.

In a breathtaking last-minute touchdown last Sunday, the Ti-Cats rushed past the Montreal Alouettes to earn their first down against their arch nemesis, the Calgary Stampeders. These two teams have tackled each other before as they battled for the coveted Grey Cup last year. In the gut-wrenching last-minute touchdown in the final quarter, the Stampeders punted the Ti-Cats out of the competition.

In their return showdown, the Premier, in a show of support for our Ontario team, has entered into a friendly wager with Alberta Premier Ralph Klein. When our Tiger-Cats sack the Stampeders on Sunday and win the Grey Cup, Premier Klein's prize will be to travel east to Ontario and attend the Camp Trillium fundraiser. If things go the other way, the Premier would attend the Kids' Kottage event in Alberta.

I stand here today to ask all members of the House to show their support for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and wish them good luck on Sunday. As the Premier said yesterday to Ron, a real, live tiger nicknamed Tory the Tiger, "Go Tigers and eat 'em raw."

MANDATORY DRUG TESTING

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I want to stand today in my place and really condemn the gov-

ernment for its intention to test welfare recipients for drug abuse. I think this is the worst case of Big Brother attacking the most vulnerable people in our society.

At the end of the day, we know that the American Civil Liberties Union has condemned this and, as a result, a US Supreme Court judge quashed the state of Michigan's attempt to initiate the same program for mandatory drug testing. They ruled that it was constitutionally invalid and that it violated individual rights in the US.

Here at home, our own human rights commissioner has said this is wrong. He has grave concerns about mandatory drug testing on welfare recipients.

Let me say to the government as well that US studies and studies in our own country demonstrate that drug abuse among welfare recipients is no higher than it is among the general population.

If you really want to help people who are drug abusers, then put resources into treatment facilities and into prevention, and help our police officers on the street deal with drug dealers, putting them behind bars. Don't pick on welfare recipients.

BENNETT HEALTH CARE CENTRE

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Seniors in Halton and across Ontario have made tremendous contributions to our province. I rise today to recognize these contributions and to celebrate the recent opening of the Bennett Health Care Centre in Georgetown.

The Bennett Health Care Centre has been a personal priority of mine for some time now, and on October 27 of this year, I had the privilege of officially opening the facility in Georgetown.

I would like to congratulate Connell Smith, chair of the board of directors; Ken Harris, past-chair; Paul Armstrong, a further past-chair; Judy Donnelly, the administrator, as well as many other people such as the Georgetown Hospital staff who have been instrumental in seeing this new 65-bed long-term-care facility to completion.

The provision of modern long-term-care facilities like the new Bennett Health Care Centre is a top priority for our government. That is why I'm particularly proud of the announcement last year of \$1.2 billion in additional funding to expand long-term-care community services and build new long-term-care facilities across the province. These initiatives are creating 20,000 new long-term-care beds, for a total of 35% more beds, and expanded community-based services in Ontario.

Once again, I'd like to extend my congratulations and gratitude to all of those who made the opening of the Bennett Health Care Centre a reality in Georgetown.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today on a very solemn and respectful occasion. The people of Ontario are truly blessed and fortunate to have a public service workforce who dedicate themselves to serve the public and

ensure their safety, ensure that they are secure, something we take too much for granted all too often.

Specifically, I want to highlight the heroic job our firefighters do day in and day out across this province. At any given time, the men and women of our community fire departments know the risks involved in the performance of their duties in this very high-risk job. Unfortunately, in this very high-risk job there are accidents and more tragically, even deaths. To go to work each day knowing that your job requires you to put it on the line is stress that not only is borne by the firefighters, but borne by their families and loved ones.

Today I solemnly ask all members of this House to join me in a pledge to honour the memory of fallen firefighters by having the government of Ontario erect a monument to those brave individuals and declare the first Saturday after Labour Day an official day of mourning province-wide.

1340

ALCOHOL AND GAMING INSPECTORS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's now been a month that our gaming institutions, be it Casino Rama, Casino Windsor, Casino Niagara, bingo games across the province, and licensed places that serve drinks, have effectively been operating without control or regulation because this government will not respond to the settlement offers made by some 200 alcohol and gaming inspectors.

These women and men who serve this province, the residents of this province and visitors to this province are the ones who make sure there is no slot-machine tampering going on in casinos. They're the ones who make sure that minors aren't being served alcohol in bars and other licensed places. They're the ones who make sure that the proceeds from charity bingos in fact go to charities rather than being skimmed off the top. These people have worked hard and served this province for a long time.

Their request is modest. They seek but some fairness in wages and some rights for part-time and contract staff. It's about time this government settled that strike and got these people back to work, to make sure people aren't getting ripped off in our casinos and that underage people aren't being served alcohol.

HURON HEIGHTS EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to inform the House today of the official opening of the Huron Heights Early Learning Centre in my riding of London-Fanshawe.

In the previous mandate of this government, Premier Harris asked Dr Fraser Mustard, an acknowledged world authority on early childhood learning, and Margaret McCain, a noted child advocate, to lead a study of Ontario's system and offer advice on how to make it

work better for both parents and children. The result was a comprehensive report, the Early Years Study.

This government is committed, in our Blueprint, to building Ontario's infrastructure by working with the private sector to provide funding through innovative, leading-edge financing techniques such as leasing arrangements, buybacks and private partnerships so that we can make better use of public dollars and maximize the benefits to our province.

I am proud to say that Huron Heights is a shining example of what can be accomplished. The cost of this project was \$1.2 million. No direct funding was received from any level of government. The centre will provide early childhood learning and child care for 120 children in London-Fanshawe. The centre is operated by London Bridge Child Care Services, a non-profit organization that has 13 licensed early learning centres in London and Sarnia, and employs 250 people and provides 1,000 spaces to families and their children between three and six years of age.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise to recognize something that should chill every member in this House and alarm every parent in this province. We now have families with children with autism who have had to apply to the courts, who have taken a legal route, to try to get not special things but basic health care and basic education for their children with autism. Today they had to initiate proceedings against this government to get things that this country and this province have held to be available to all citizens.

They have done that saying it is their conviction that it's not the lack of ability of society to assist in the ways their children need, it's not because those things can't be done, but to quote their release, "It's because we have a government that does not want to fit the bill."

They have private schools now for children with autism, draining families of \$20,000 a year because we have a government that finds other priorities than children with special needs. All across the province there are families that the supervisors of our schools tell us are having to go without because this government has cut \$106 million. Shame on this government today.

Congratulations to the parents for bringing this issue to a point. But it shouldn't be resolved in court. It should be answered here.

PREMIER'S RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARD

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): The province of Ontario continues to be a major player on the research and development world stage. It gives me great pleasure to rise in this House today to recognize the researchers and scientists from Trent University, located in my riding of Peterborough.

Some of you might be familiar with the term "brain drain." This is when our best and brightest decide to leave Ontario or Canada for better opportunities elsewhere. I am proud to say today that the initiatives of this government are keeping Ontario talent where it belongs, here in Ontario.

The Premier's Research Excellence Award serves that purpose, in addition to furthering their ongoing research of international significance. Recently, Dr Jim Parker of the psychology department at Trent University was awarded this prestigious honour, which will enable him to further his studies in the fields of emotional intelligence as well as mental and physical health.

It was not too long ago that another world-class researcher from Trent University, Dr Holger Hintelmann of the chemistry and environmental and resource studies department, also received this award.

I would like all members of this House to join me today to congratulate these and many other recipients of the Premier's Research Excellence Award from across this province. We should take pride that these great minds are the Nobel Prize winners of the future.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SERGEANT RICK McDONALD MEMORIAL ACT (SUSPECT APPREHENSION PURSUITS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 COMMEMORANT LE SERGENT RICK McDONALD (POURSUITES EN VUE D'APPRÉHENDER DES SUSPECTS)

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act in memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of suspect apprehension pursuits / Projet de loi 22, Loi commémorant le sergent Rick McDonald et modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les poursuites en vue d'appréhender des suspects.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: This morning I arrived in the chamber for the purpose of participating in private members' business, as is usual Thursday mornings. Earlier this morning I, along with many other members of this Legislature, had been at the kickoff breakfast for White Ribbon Week, which you're familiar with. It has become an international tradition. Of course, the white ribbon that men wear is a proclamation of their condemnation of

violence against women and a proclamation of their intolerance of it, of their willingness to speak out and intervene and end violence to women here in Toronto, here in Ontario and Canada and across the world, violence which is unspeakable and is not in itself the subject matter of this point of order.

I put the ribbon on this morning, as many others did. I arrived in the House quite frankly not being conscious—the ribbon was there; it had been there for several hours. No disrespect or criticism, but the clerk came over and very politely reminded me that I was wearing the ribbon without having sought unanimous consent. Fair enough; I understand her interest in doing that. So I did seek unanimous consent. There were a small number of people in the House. The Speaker properly put to the chamber my request for unanimous consent.

1350

To my embarrassment, shame and, quite frankly, sorrow, great sadness, someone—I don't know who, and I don't care who—said no. The chamber was well aware of what the white ribbon meant, because in the course of seeking unanimous consent I had made the explanation about the white ribbon.

Speaker, I understand the ruling that was made on April 5, 1997, by your predecessor the Speaker in the former Parliament. I understand the reasons for the rule. I have a transcript of his ruling from April 1997. You will recall that the ruling was made in the context of what had been a very intense partisan debate between opposition and government at the time, over a political issue. There were, I acknowledge, various members, especially of the opposition, who were sporting buttons and ribbons of a particular colour that identified with the partisan issue of the debate. It was in the context of that, and after a series of events, that the Speaker made the ruling that required unanimous consent. The Speaker also—and I would ask you to refer to that April 5, 1997, ruling—spoke about the fact that these were partisan displays. Notwithstanding that, he indicated that in the future any ribbon, button etc would require unanimous consent.

Let me put this to you, Speaker, and this is the point of order: In the context of the former Speaker's ruling, where a display of one sort or another is designed to attach yourself to a partisan issue before the House, and you're using it for a demonstration about an issue in the House that's currently being debated, I accept—not only accept, but I understand—that Speaker's ruling.

But understand what happened today. One member—and it doesn't matter who—out of 103, by virtue of denying unanimous consent, can prevent any one of us from displaying something so non-partisan, so apolitical and something that, quite frankly, in my view constitutes a relevance to the freedom of expression. I'm putting this to you, Speaker, with great respect to the former Speaker's ruling. It has been there since 1997. It has been tested. Today, I believe, with great respect, the full extent of the Speaker's ruling was shown to perhaps be overly broad in how it addressed issues. I'm asking you, Speaker, to please consider on this point of order that

there are certain things—I'm speaking of ribbons; the one that comes to mind is in the context of today's scenario—about which there is no partisan nature and about which it is so grossly unfair and improper to permit one member of the Legislature, for whatever his or her reason might be, to prevent the rest of the Legislature from making a statement that has no partisan nature to it.

I'm asking the Speaker to consider revisiting the ruling of April 5, 1997, so that never again should any member have to rise to seek unanimous consent, for instance, for a white ribbon in expression of men's solidarity with women and men's commitment to ending violence against women, so that can never again be the subject matter of what could be a purely partisan gesture by even but one member of the Legislature.

I think you understand the matter. I wouldn't raise this had I not reflected on it, had I not consulted with other members of caucuses and had I not considered it to be sufficiently worthy of your making the rather dramatic gesture of in effect moderating or modifying a previous ruling. I put to you that it's a precedent that is sound as it applies to a partisan debate, but it should not be applied so as to permit one out of 103 members preventing 102 members making a gesture that is in itself without partisan quality and has only as its goal the most genuine of human interests: protection of women—girls, teenage women, adult women—from violence of all kinds.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his point of order. The government House leader, on the same point of order.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I understand this morning the member opposite asked for unanimous consent in this Legislature. It's clear that unanimous consent means unanimity in this Legislature. Parties have talked from time to time about whether or not that consent should go, notwithstanding one or two members would oppose it. But unanimity means unanimity. It means everybody in the House agrees to a particular matter. Do you draw the line at one member, two members, five members, nine members or whatever number of members, to override something that's occurring outside the ambit of our standing orders? My view would be that unanimity should be unanimity. If all the members of the House cannot agree to stepping outside the standing orders on which we run our business, then we should not step outside those standing orders.

I might say that this morning the reason the member was denied his unanimity was because he didn't give any kind of notice to the other parties that he was going to ask for this particular unanimous consent. In fact, the House leader for the third party has apologized to me that he did not let me know that the member was going to stand up, because we had agreed in advance that we would give unanimous consent this afternoon when unanimous consent was asked for.

So I want to make it absolutely clear that the reason unanimity was denied is because we were taken by sur-

prise, that the members who were in the Legislature at the time did not know whether there had been any consultation on this particular matter. As you may know, Mr Speaker, it's almost every day in this Legislature that somebody asks for unanimous consent to step outside the rules. We can't continue to do that and run this place in a competent manner if we continue to ask for unanimous consent and expect this to happen on a surprise basis with nobody knowing exactly what's happening.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the point that ought to be made is quite simply that there is a major difference between wearing a button advocating a certain position or being against a certain position than wearing a ribbon of whatever kind or nature. An argument could even be made that it's part of somebody's attire etc. There really is a difference between demonstrating something actively, either for or against a cause, or for or against a government policy, whatever—and I would seriously ask you to consider in your ruling that there is a difference between a button and an almost silent kind of response by way of wearing a ribbon. There are not only the white ribbons that we're talking about today but there are many other ribbons that are worn for different varieties of causes during the year as well.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Mr Speaker, just briefly on the same point of order: Speaker Stockwell actually set a precedent for the ruling that we're asking for from you today when he said that those buttons or ribbons that are not political demonstrations are acceptable. For example, he ruled that Kiwanis pins, Rotarian pins and poppies may be worn in the House. So already we have a ruling where there are particular kinds of ribbons or symbols that we are allowed to wear, as identified by the previous Speaker, that are non-partisan in nature. I submit to you that that is somewhat objective in terms of identifying for the whole House what is considered to be clearly non-partisan.

1400

In response to the government House leader, I believe it's quite possible that everybody forgot that the House was sitting this morning. When the member from Welland-Thorold got up and asked to wear this white ribbon, he explained exactly the symbolism of the ribbon.

It was done in a non-partisan nature and we were quite shocked when somebody said no. The point we're trying to make is that it is unacceptable to shut down freedom of expression in this House because of this ruling, and I don't believe it was the intention of the former Speaker to do that.

We would ask you today to take a look at that ruling and understand that there is already a precedent set by the former Speaker to allow clearly non-partisan symbols to be worn in this House. We find it unacceptable that one member can shut that down, whether he or she be disgruntled and wants to get even with another party's member or because they don't understand or because they're opposed personally to the particular cause. So I

ask you to take a very serious look at this ruling, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Niagara Centre, just before we go on, I think I have the gist of it. The member for Niagara Centre made some valid points. A point of order on the same issue?

Mr Kormos: If I may very briefly, I heard the government House leader. I tried to explain the context in which I wore this ribbon. I wore it as a result of putting it on this morning. I wore it with great pride. The clerk, to her credit, brought it to my attention. I removed my jacket so as not to offend the rules of the House.

I appreciate that nobody gave the House leader notice. My House leader didn't know I was here wearing it. It wasn't a situation wherein one could give notice. I removed my jacket until I had an opportunity to seek unanimous consent.

I don't think there's a single person in here who doesn't understand what it was about. I explained the reason for the ribbon. I didn't come in here challenging the government members, and I appreciate I've done that from time to time. But I didn't come in here challenging the government members or the Speaker by wearing the ribbon and attempting to create an issue. I appreciate what the House leader had to say, but I must advise him that I find it unfortunate that he would perceive it in that way when I've explained how the course of events progressed this morning.

The Speaker: I have the gist of the situation. Point of order but very short, member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just want to add one part to this debate. I hear what the government House leader is saying but I think you need to recognize that, Speaker, as you well know, the ability of members to participate in this place as it was under the old rules some 10 years ago is much changed. Members are not as free as they used to be to participate and do things in this place when it comes to debate etc. For the government to say we cannot operate if we were to go outside of those rules, we're not asking for the rules in this case to be pushed to the limit.

The issue is that it's very specific. Speaker Stockwell I think made a good point that was put forward by my colleague. I think it's important that we give the ability to members to do these types of things because they are non-partisan in nature.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their submissions. One of the difficult things for a Speaker—I understand what the white ribbon is about. On occasion I may not understand what another ribbon is about if it happens to be blue. I understand the red ribbon, on which we had unanimous consent last week for Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The difficulty for a Speaker is knowing what each of the ribbons means. We cannot know, and in this case we did.

I think what happened in this case is that when it was brought to the attention of the members, they did, through unanimous consent, give some consent. It was unfortunate that one member today for whatever reason

spoke up, but the ultimate result was that the ribbons were allowed and we did get unanimous consent.

I have had a chance to read Speaker Stockwell's ruling and I agree, it gets very difficult for a Speaker to know when a ribbon is non-partisan and when it is partisan—less so with the pins. So it's very difficult. What we have done, in situations like that, is ask for unanimous consent. It has been my experience in this House for nine years that that goes as it did last week with the Mothers against Drunk Driving and as it did today when unanimous consent was given, that there is some unanimous consent. But it makes it very difficult, with the number of causes and the number of ribbons, for a Speaker to know whether it is partisan and whether it is political or whether, as it is with the white ribbon, it is a non-partisan issue. That's the difficulty for a Speaker.

I have read Speaker Stockwell's submission of April 5 and I have to agree with that submission. It makes it very difficult when a Speaker doesn't know a particular ribbon and what the requirements are. He was very clear in saying that pins that were of a political nature, and the member from Niagara Centre was very clear.

I would hope, and my feeling is, that all members in situations like this will attempt to work together—it's been my experience that they have—but it is my particular feeling that if a member does want to wear a ribbon they should ask for unanimous consent in this House.

I appreciate the member raising the issue. I think he did a fine job in presenting that and I understand where he's coming from on this issue. The circumstances this morning were unfortunate, but I appreciate all members' indulgence and patience on this issue.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POLICE PURSUIT LEGISLATION

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): On November 15, I informed the Legislature of this government's intention to amend the Highway Traffic Act to make Ontario's streets safer and to ensure we have communities in which we can feel secure to live, work and raise our families. A few minutes ago I had the honour of presenting a bill which, if passed by this House, will accomplish those goals.

This bill is named in memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald of the Sudbury Regional Police Service. Sergeant McDonald was killed this summer, tragically, while placing a spike belt to stop a fleeing vehicle.

I'd like to point out that the members of Sergeant McDonald's family are here today in our gallery. His sister, Marlene Viau, his brother Danny McDonald and three members of the Sudbury police—his best friend, Joe Williams; Craig Moxam; and Rob Thirkill—are here with us today. Although his wife, Corinne, and Police

Chief Alex McCauley are not here today, they are here with us in spirit and support for this bill. I once again offer my sympathies and those of the members of the House to the family and friends of Sergeant Rick McDonald.

Sergeant McDonald was doing his job, and for that he paid the ultimate price. Sadly, while we mourn the loss of Sergeant McDonald, we must also remember all of the other victims, police officers and civilians alike, who have lost their lives through the reckless actions of those who believe they are above the law.

This bill, however, speaks to all Ontarians. It is our intention, with the introduction of this bill, to send a strong message to the public: Those who attempt to flee from the police can expect to face the toughest penalties in Canada under the Highway Traffic Act.

I was very pleased to notice that my friends opposite agree with the intent of the legislation and I hope we can look forward to speedy passage of this bill. For too long, we have seen the senseless loss of life that can result when drivers try to escape from the police. This bill, if passed by members of this Legislature, will get tough with those who think they can flee from the police and endanger innocent lives in the process.

If passed by the Legislature, the amendments will make those who wilfully continue to escape from pursuing police liable to: driver's licence suspensions of five years, up from the present three years, for pursuits not involving death or bodily harm; in the case of bodily harm or death, court-ordered driver's licence suspensions of not less than 10 years and up to life, with the suspension to be consecutive to any other suspension; a minimum jail sentence of not less than 14 days and up to six months, in addition to penalties under section 216; and a fine from \$5,000 to \$25,000.

Those who commit the offence of failing to stop at the request or signal of a police officer will also face increased penalties. Fines will be doubled to the range of \$1,000 to \$10,000, and a regulatory change will increase the demerit point penalty to seven points, the highest number of points deducted for other serious offences under the Highway Traffic Act.

1410

We will be the first province to impose such severe penalties on those who flee from the police, just as we were among the leaders in developing suspect apprehension pursuits regulations. We are determined to stop the senseless waste of human life that all too often results when suspects flee the police.

I would also like to take this opportunity to call on the federal Liberal government to take action. We have done all we can under the Highway Traffic Act and now we need changes to the Criminal Code. The toughest penalties will come by way of prison sentences, and the federal Liberal government has the opportunity to finally listen to our police and our citizens. I might say that Rick's sister Marlene has been currently trying to lobby the federal government to really see that we need to toughen the penalties.

Just by way of a personal note, I did not have the privilege and honour of knowing Rick McDonald, but at the funeral when listening to the chaplain speak about him and in speaking with his family, Rick McDonald was a man who was larger than life. He was a great community person. He was very much like many police officers who serve our communities, who protect our communities.

One story that I do remember from the funeral was that Rick McDonald happened to find out about a young boy who couldn't afford to buy a bike, and although he was a newlywed officer and I guess with all kinds of requirements for his own needs and his household, he went out of his way and bought this young boy a bicycle out of his own money because he felt it was the right thing to do. This was the type of person Sergeant Rick McDonald was.

I say to all of us in the House, let's work together to make our streets safe for everyone.

In conclusion, I say to both opposition parties, hopefully we can co-operate in the passage of this legislation as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I stand of course in support of this legislation and to commend the Solicitor General for living up to the commitment he gave Rick's wife, his family, the Sudbury Regional Police Service and myself on the day of Rick's funeral.

Unlike the Solicitor General, I knew Rick McDonald very well. Our relationship goes back an awful long time. I remember so very well the day, as a police commissioner in Sudbury, we hired this very tall individual who was happy-go-lucky and came from Chelmsford. On the evening we presented him to the police services board as another new officer for the Sudbury Regional Police Service, I commented to the board that they grow them tall in Chelmsford. Without hesitation and with the humour we all learned to appreciate, Rick McDonald simply said, "Commissioner Bartolucci, you should have grown up in Chelmsford instead of Gatchell." It's with this sense of humour and this genuine concern for his fellow persons that Rick McDonald approached his policing with dedication, with determination and with diligence.

Rick worked in various departments within the service, including the uniform division, the old clothes division and the criminal investigation division. At the time of his death, he had attained the rank of sergeant.

It is an understatement to say that he was highly respected by his peers, his supervisors and our community. I worked closely with him in his role as the president of the Sudbury Regional Police Association. It is ironic and sad today that just last year, during the police association lobby day, he and Officer Craig Moxam, who is in the gallery today, were in my office lobbying for the type of legislation the Solicitor General has introduced today.

Rick married his beautiful and devoted wife, Corinne, in 1995. Corinne, who is also a sergeant with the Sudbury force, is dedicated to ensuring that Rick's memory

and policing is enhanced. The bond between them was special and it was based on unconditional love for each other. Corinne, Rick, Chief Alex McCauley and Deputy Chief Cunningham worked closely with me on my private member's bill with regard to child prostitution. I considered Rick more than a policeman; I considered him to be a very good friend, and I speak for the entire Sudbury community when I say that he is greatly missed.

Rick is the second officer from the Sudbury force to die in the line of duty in just over six years. Joe MacDonald, Rick's very good friend, was fatally shot during a routine traffic check in 1993. Both of these tragedies have resulted in tougher legislation. But as legislators in this province we must all commit to being proactive in the protection of our police officers and the public they serve and protect.

Rick was taken from us while we slept in the early morning hours of July 28, 1999, but his family, Marlene and Danny, his very good friend, Joe Williams, and Officers Craig Moxam and Rob Thirkill must know that today his memory will never be taken away from us. In death, he is still making a tremendous contribution to the policing profession to which he was so devoted.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to issue to the Solicitor General our party's hand in saying, yes, we will support and, yes, we commit ourselves to ensure quick passage of the bill.

To the family, I would like to say, on behalf of the official opposition, thank you for the gift of Rick McDonald, thank you for the gift and the celebration of a dedicated life to the public service. Our sympathies are with you, and our prayers are with your family and with Rick.

In co-operation, we will ensure that the bill will be passed, and I want to say to you, Minister, that in the near future we would like to offer some suggestions about how we can improve and look forward to the next situation that we need to deal with in policing.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My colleague from Niagara Centre will speak to the details of the legislation that the minister has spoken about today and about policing matters in general.

For my part, I want to very briefly acknowledge the presence of the family members who are in the gallery today and the friends of Sergeant McDonald who are here as well. I also would like to acknowledge that Corinne is not here for very good reasons; we have no doubt about that. It must be very difficult for all of you to be here today, and so I want to acknowledge the courage of all of you.

I want to say that Rick McDonald was a very dedicated and committed police officer. He performed all his duties, regardless of what department they were in at the Sudbury Regional Police, with enormous pride.

On an early morning in July 1999, he was in the process of performing what he loved to do most, and that was to ensure and guarantee the safety of the public in our community. It was during this very duty, which he always committed to with much pride and energy, that he

was killed when he was trying to place a spiked belt to stop a fleeing vehicle.

It is fitting that the contribution he made in our community and the contribution he made to the Sudbury police department was recognized by the Sudbury Police Services Board several weeks ago. There was an annual awards ceremony, and at that time an honour was posthumously bestowed upon Rick McDonald, and his family was there to accept it. I was tremendously proud that the police chief and the police services board made sure that that was done. It was very important.

This death was a tragic loss to the family, to his wife, to all of his colleagues in Sudbury, some of whom are here today, and to the province generally. I want to say to the family that over and above what my colleague will mention here today, I can guarantee that we will do whatever we can to ensure speedy passage of this bill to ensure that a tragedy like this never occurs again in this province.

1420

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): As Ms Martel indicated, I anticipate support of this legislation so it becomes enacted promptly. Having said that, Solicitor General, it remains that the vast majority of police officers in this province, especially as new recruits come on to forces, have never had any practical pursuit training. It's tragic every time a civilian or police officer is injured or, even more so, dies, in the course of a police pursuit.

Cops are inevitably damned if they do and damned if they don't. We put incredible pressures on police. We have incredibly high expectations of them, and we hold them to incredibly high standards. But more often than not, and increasingly so, we're not giving them the tools to do their job.

I already told you, Solicitor General, about a Niagara regional police officer who stopped me and showed me the spiked belt loaded in the trunk of his car but then explained that he hadn't even received adequate training to remove the belt from its case with all the Velcro and tabs and gadgetry.

Please address those issues as well. Please ensure that Aylmer and its facilities are accessible to police officers from every municipality and every region of this province. Please ensure that those programs are provided in such a way that increasingly limited police budgets don't prevent police officers from participating in those training programs. Please ensure that, yes, new technology continues to be investigated and utilized, but that police officers get the training they deserve before they're called upon to use it.

I put it to you that in the city of Toronto there's been significant concern that a community this size doesn't have a helicopter available to its police force. I tell you here and now that this government has a responsibility, because our cops have told us that a helicopter can and will be an effective tool in the city of Toronto. In fact, its proximity to so many neighbouring communities, from the Niagara region all the way out through Oshawa-Durham, would make it available to them too.

Do these things cost money? Of course they cost money. But what price do you put on police officers' lives? What price do you put on innocent civilians' lives? If we want adequate, competent policing, we had better be prepared to invest in it. That should be the goal. And this government has reduced the level of investment in policing to an unprecedented level.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will members please join with me today in welcoming, in the east gallery, Alan Robinson, who was the member for Scarborough-Ellesmere in the 32nd Parliament.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, before question period: I believe that Mr Peters had asked, under section 37, to have an opportunity for what we call a late show with the Minister of Citizenship. I seek unanimous consent that that be postponed from this evening to next Tuesday evening.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Agreed.

WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

CAMPAGNE DU RUBAN BLANC

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I believe we have unanimous consent for statements by all three parties on the White Ribbon Campaign this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Martin: This morning I was pleased to join close to 1,000 people attending a pancake breakfast held to launch the annual White Ribbon Campaign.

The White Ribbon Campaign was started in the aftermath of the horrible tragedy that we know as the Montreal massacre. On December 6, 1989, nearly 10 years ago, 14 young women were shot and killed at L'École polytechnique in Montreal.

That incident, terrible as it was, served as a wake-up call. Men across this country were forced to take a long, hard look at the issue of male violence against women. In riding society of male violence against women, it was clear that men must shoulder the responsibility.

On the first anniversary of the Montreal tragedy, commemorative vigils were held across this country, and by and large those vigils were organized and attended by women. Certainly throughout history it has been women who have organized against male violence. Women have worked in their communities, facing enormous barriers, to fight violence against women. They have shouldered that burden, and built the shelters, women's centres and

rape crisis centres from the grass roots. They have chosen to speak out and have refused to live in fear.

The founders of the White Ribbon Campaign were men who, reflecting on those vigils and on what happened in Montreal, began to ask themselves about what role men could play and what responsibility men should carry in respect to violence against women. The idea they came up with, which became the basis of a country-wide annual campaign, was this: When a man puts on a white ribbon, it speaks of his commitment not to commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women, and it challenges and encourages other men to do the same.

Men need to make that personal commitment, and they need to speak out to other men. The simple act of putting on a white ribbon can be the first step. This morning, after the White Ribbon Campaign breakfast, Howard Hampton took a walk up Yonge Street. As he walked, he stopped to speak with men about the campaign. He talked to them about the importance of men taking responsibility and taking action to fight male violence against women.

We can each do our part. I only wish that this government would put aside their rhetoric and hot-button politics and show some leadership in this struggle, because the fact is that they have taken away the support that abused women so desperately need to build for themselves and their children new lives that are free from violence. They will not even meet with the shelter and second-stage housing workers who deal with these issues every day. Because of their cuts to shelter and second-stage housing programs, women and their children are being turned away. Because of their cuts, 50,000 women each year get a busy signal when they call the assaulted women's help line. It's a disgrace and an outrage. The government could learn something from the White Ribbon Campaign. Take responsibility; do something.

The White Ribbon Campaign recognizes that only when more and more men take up that challenge will we start to see the end of this terrible epidemic. That is what the White Ribbon Campaign is all about. Although it addresses something that is horrible and ugly, it is a campaign with a positive message. It speaks to the better part of all of us. It works from the premise that violence against women is not inevitable or natural. It works from the premise that men are not naturally violent, that most men in our society are non-violent and that men as well as women can work together to build a society where no woman need fear violence at the hands of a man.

I have been proud to wear a white ribbon today.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I rise today to make members of the House and the public aware of the White Ribbon Campaign, which represents men working to end men's violence against women. This campaign runs from November 25 to December 6.

I would also like to recognize November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This day, which is declared by the United

Nations, is observed each year in dozens of countries around the world.

1430

The United Nations has stated clearly that violence against women is a human rights issue. The UN also makes it clear that violence against women in all its forms constitutes a breach of women's basic human rights. This International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women falls in the final week of Wife Assault Prevention Month in Ontario.

This government will not tolerate violence against women. Across Ontario, the government spends over \$100 million annually on programs and services to prevent and address violence against women. Since the release of the government's agenda for action, more than 40 new initiatives in the areas of safety, justice and prevention have helped to meet the needs of abused and assaulted women in Ontario.

The chief coroner said that he is pleased with the response in changes that have resulted from the jury's recommendations in response to the May-Iles inquest. This government has created Canada's most extensive domestic violence court system. We have also established the Office for Victims of Crime. This is the first of its kind in Canada.

Many improvements have been made to the way women are served in our communities. Service providers are working together, sharing information and coordinating their programs so that women can obtain the services they need, when they need them, close to home.

We here in this province are not alone in our efforts to address and eliminate violence against women. Our provincial government's annual awareness raising campaign and ongoing efforts to respond to the crimes of wife assault and sexual assault are just one spoke in the wheel of change that extends throughout this continent and around the world.

I ask, on this International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, that we not only consider women suffering violence within our own provincial and national borders, but that we reflect on the global plight of women who endure violence every day, in many forms, in many nations on earth. I ask that we include these women in our thoughts, discussions and actions on violence against women because violence against women is truly a crime against humanity.

M. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): Cet après-midi, c'est avec beaucoup d'émotions que j'assiste au lancement de la Campagne du ruban blanc.

Il s'agit d'une campagne pour hommes voués à mettre fin à la violence faite aux femmes par les hommes. Pour la deuxième fois au mois de novembre, l'Assemblée est appelée à reconnaître la tragédie de la violence faite aux femmes, c'est-à-dire la violence dirigée contre la moitié de l'espèce humaine.

Let me quote from the White Ribbon Campaign brochure on violence against women:

"If it were between countries, we'd call it a war. If it were a disease, we'd refer to it as an epidemic. If it were

an oil spill, we'd call it a disaster. But it's happening to women, and it's just an everyday affair."

Nous percevons notre société comme étant une qui est juste et équitable où tous et toutes vivent dans le respect mutuel de l'un et de l'autre.

We think we have a society of tolerance. We think we live in a place that is known for its civilization and its compassion. But it's with some sadness that we're called upon with this ribbon to reflect that that isn't the reality for over half of the people in our society.

If we look at the statistics, we see that there are 77 women in Ontario who have died at the hands of their partner or their spouse since Arlene May died on March 8, 1996. Those women don't share a rosy view of our society. They can't. For them, that conception held most of the year is false.

In 1991, a handful of men in Ontario and Quebec decided they had a responsibility to urge men to speak out against violence against women. They chose this symbol for their opposition to men's violence against women and it's worn for the entire week, marking the anniversary of the December 6 massacre of 14 women at l'École polytechnique in Montreal. Since 1991, this campaign is the largest effort of its kind in the world. Those who started it and perpetuate it have to be congratulated for the initiative they have taken to end men's violence against women. I applaud what they have done and acknowledge their role.

I want to appeal specifically and particularly to the men of this assembly to respect this day both personally and, because we are the legislators of this province, in what we do in our professional lives. What this day is about is the fundamentals. It's about taking the time, spending a tiny bit of effort, a very small amount of effort, to isolate some of the root cause of the horrific violence that has been perpetuated against women, to stamp out the vestiges of support that still exist, that are still there, that still shape the attitudes of some of the perpetrators of the awful violence that leads to the necessity of this day. That's all this campaign is about. It's about causing people to think. The organizers believe that large-scale educational programs can work, and I would like to believe that we support that, that we will help in ways official and personal to condition the thinking that condones violence against women out of society.

The campaign supports governments that fund programs for the survivors of violence, such as shelters for battered women and the rape crisis centres. As the 10 members of the Liberal caucus who were at the breakfast this morning learned, that's where any profits derived by the White Ribbon Campaign go: to women's shelters. It is absolutely inconceivable that this province today is in a position of less support for women's shelters, that they have been cut in a way that sees two second-stage housing projects closed. I would like to infer not a partisan comment but a challenge to come to terms with that kind of development in this province on a day like this.

Saviez-vous qu'une agression sexuelle est perpétrée toutes les sept minutes au Canada et que 90 % des

victimés sont des femmes ? Nous vivons en état de crise et nous ne l'avouons même pas.

Half of our society runs the risk of being a victim of that elevated risk of violence. It is extremely important that this government take measures to ensure the safety of women in our society on the street, in their workplaces and in their homes.

I want to encourage the efforts of this campaign. I am made hopeful, I know my colleagues are also made hopeful, including the women in our caucus, about the possibilities, the prospects if all the fathers, nephews, brothers and spouses are able to take some time today to reflect on that particular responsibility—not blame but the responsibility—that the statistics, the style, the leftover style of our society should make us willing to accept, that disproportionate responsibility we have for the violence that women have had to undergo.

Every man in this Legislature has been offered a white ribbon. I want to urge you to wear it; I want to ask you in the spirit of what is intended here. This is not an ideology; this is just simple, fundamental respect and recognition of a job not yet done towards women. I hope you will participate in this campaign. I hope that all of us in this House will embrace the movement to end violence.

1440

Each year I take part in a vigil that's held at Women's College Hospital. I am one of a number who hold a candle for the victims of the Montreal massacre. As the candle burns down and the wax drips, I am caused, at least in that time, to think about what it must be like to not feel safe, to think about what it must be like to cross the street when a man you don't know is following, even at a distance, behind you, to think about what it must feel like to have been a part of some of these tragedies and families in situations like the Montreal massacre.

All the White Ribbon Campaign asks is for a similar amount of time on the part of every man in this province.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship, but first I'd like to thank those members who unanimously supported my resolution today, especially those on the government bench. But now to the action part.

In the gallery today is Dr Golbuka from the Ukraine. He practised 15 years, he even published. He has been in Canada for three years; he is unable to practise. Dr Martinez, a veterinarian, practised in Israel, practised in Europe; four years in Canada, unable to practise here. Ifad Karim, 18 years' experience, six years in Canada, unable to practise. There are hundreds more, all unable to practise here in Canada, and yet we have a crying shortage of doctors and veterinarians right across this province.

I'd like to ask this minister, when are you going to act? These people here today are asking for your help. What will you do to help them today?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to refer this question to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): To the member opposite, who I think shares the commitment of the members in this House to assist immigrants in accessing their trades or professions, including the immigrants who are with us as professionals in the gallery today: In 1995, this government made the access to professions and trades project, which existed at the time, a permanent unit of government, reflecting our commitment to addressing the issue. Just recently, after working with so many giving us the best advice, we have sought proposals to create an academic credentials assessment service that will help newcomers to Ontario to quickly and fairly evaluate their foreign credentials. This service will set standards for recognizing foreign credentials and reduce the inconsistencies and disorganization that often faces skilled newcomers today.

Mr Ruprecht: I'm really surprised at that answer because Mike Harris, as Premier, promised swift action in 1995. The Minister of Citizenship at that time, Marilyn Mushinski, who is present here today, in December 1995 said, "One of the most significant barriers to equal opportunity is access, and we will act in 1996."

The next minister, Isabel Bassett, guess what she said? She said, "I'm pushing up to attempt to work even faster so we can make sure that citizens who have been trained elsewhere in the world have their skills recognized here."

Today, this minister says, "We're going to create an academic assessment service," that is now over five years old.

My question today is simply this: Does she realize what she's asking those professionals from other countries who come to Canada to do? They're driving cabs, delivering pizzas and doing all kinds of restaurant cleaning jobs. Minister, you realize what you're doing. We are now beyond an academic credentials service. We're looking in terms of a special—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Member's time.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We have been working for the last four years to improve what already existed when the other two parties were in government, to the point that we've asked Price Waterhouse for their best recommendations. I said that we are working in partnership with occupational regulatory bodies and outlining specifically what qualifications newcomers need to practise trades in Ontario.

There's a lot of excitement in the community. The criticism from the other side is unwarranted because many of them did not accomplish this during their term in office. The information that has been put together with regard to qualification is made available in visa offices

around the world and on the Internet. This helps immigrants prepare to work in Ontario before they even arrive in our country.

We also support merit-based evaluation of certain skills to ensure that competence is fairly and rigorously proven.

Mr Ruprecht: The Price Waterhouse report is now one year old and you still haven't acted. I want you to know that you have on your desk also the report on Access to Trades and Professions in Ontario which is 10 years old and you haven't acted.

My question is the following: Does the minister realize that this is not just a point of getting jobs and changing professions, it's a question of economic rights? It's a question of human rights. To simply come to this House and say, "We're looking at it and we're planning to do an academic credentials assessment service," is not good enough. These people are here. They want answers today. They're not here because they want you to do more studies. They don't want you to look at the Price Waterhouse report for another nine years.

The question is this: Will you stand today and make a promise to these people and to the rest of Ontarians and say, "Yes, I will not only produce an academic credentials assessment service but I will implement at least some of the recommendations of the Access to Trades and Professions report which is 10 years old"?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The fact that we're in this position today is that the former two governments didn't move on that report 10 years ago. We have moved. We are not just talking about principles; we are talking about action. It's not just principles, as your motion put forward this morning, this is about action.

I will tell you that we have sponsored several projects in the meantime, on the best advice we had, in partnership with the occupational regulatory colleges and those bodies, to improve prior learning assessment as well. This is action. The proposal is out to create an academic credentials assessment service. The groups and individuals who we work with, immigrants across this province, were at a conference here in Toronto just three weeks ago and they are absolutely thrilled with our careful, thoughtful, active program.

That's the way you have to do things. We are moving slowly but smartly to move on something that the former two governments totally ignored.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday at the Ontario Hospital Association she announced that she was going to implement the new funding formula for funding hospitals across Ontario. What we know is that last week the Provincial Auditor reported that you are not funding hospitals according to the patient needs in those hospitals. We also know, as confirmed by your own spokespeople from your ministry, that \$100 million is being removed from hospital budgets in this coming year.

My question to the minister is simple. We'd like to know which hospitals will be taking additional cuts in their budgets this year. We'd like to know how you are determining what that efficient formula is going to be, as you reported yesterday at the Ontario Hospital Association's meeting, where you said that hospitals from now on will be funded according to how efficient they are. Our question is: Will it be those with the lowest case costs? Will they be losing funding? Will they be gaining funding? How are you going to implement this new funding formula?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm extremely pleased that the member opposite has mentioned the remarks I made yesterday at the Ontario Hospital Association annual meeting. This is an annual event. I will tell you that the remarks were extremely well received by the hospital sector because I emphasized that our government appreciated the partnership we had enjoyed with hospitals in this province.

They have worked very collaboratively in recognizing that they need strengthening. We need to modernize our system. They appreciate the fact that our government has set aside about \$3.2 billion for the restructuring, and that is very consistent with the figures they had identified were needed.

This morning I was at the North York General Hospital and I was pleased that they are beginning construction on a new emergency wing which will double their capacity. They have recognized that our government wants to work with hospitals to strengthen them and respond to patient needs.

1450

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, what I'd like you to do is answer this question: What constitutes an efficient hospital versus an inefficient hospital, since that's how you are now going to determine your new funding model? We want to know, is it based on a financially efficient hospital, one that's run in the black, or is it the 50% of hospitals that are currently running in the red? Is it those hospitals that cancel operating time so as to be more efficient or is it the hospitals that have a lithotripter sitting in a crate, like the one in Ottawa, because you aren't providing operating dollars? Are those the efficiencies you're looking for in order to provide money to hospitals now? We need you to determine how you are saying what an efficient hospital is. Is it according to how much each case costs the hospital, so therefore the sooner they're thrown out of the hospital, the more efficient that hospital is? Please answer this question: What determines an efficient hospital versus an inefficient hospital?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again I would be very pleased to respond to the questions of the member opposite. My remarks yesterday regarding efficiency and the need to reinvest in our hospitals, as our government is doing—in fact, we'll be increasing funding this year by about \$400 million—were well received by the hospitals and the hospital association. In fact, David MacKinnon, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, is quoted in the Ottawa Citizen today, in response to my remarks

about the new funding formula, which recognizes the needs of people in this province: "I think the minister is right to say that everyone should be as efficient as possible."

Of course, when we look at the new funding formula, it's going to be based on the demographics. It's going to be based on growth. It's going to be based on the age and gender of our population. We're going to be putting in place, and we're working with the hospitals to ensure we have a good—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm sorry, the minister's time has gone.

Mrs Pupatello: You won't mind if we don't understand what the minister has said. The last time you made hospital announcements regarding emergency care, it took you one year, and the money was still sitting in your ministry. The Premier had to bail you out and do a tour with emergency cheques, if the minister remembers that.

This year you have hospitals currently running in the red. We don't know what an "efficient" hospital means. The Provincial Auditor says that you are now no longer going to look at readmission rates to see how efficient hospitals are. This Provincial Auditor says that your funding of hospitals is not meeting patient needs. That means people are having cancelled surgery for cancer; hospitals with operating rooms like the one right here in the GTA—four operating rooms, beautifully built, with no money to run them—a lithotripter in a crate because you're not giving them operating dollars. You may make fine announcements but I doubt that the hospitals will believe you until they see the money arrive at their doorstep.

I am asking you again, what do you call an efficient hospital?

Hon Mrs Witmer: If the member opposite would care to check all of the information and try to ensure that it is factually as it should be, she would soon see that our government is the only government that has made more money available for health. As she knows, her federal cousins have taken away about \$2.6 billion in funding for health services.

Mrs Pupatello: Half of your hospitals are in debt.

The Speaker: Would the minister take her seat. Member for Windsor West, please. Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'm pleased that the member opposite is going to be in Ottawa this week because, as you probably know, the federal government took away \$2.6 billion from the province of Ontario. They have only restored \$900 million, and at the present time they are only funding our health system at 11%, which is 11 cents on every dollar. Our province, our taxpayers are paying 89% of health costs.

The Speaker: The minister's time. New question, the leader of the third party.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Attorney General. Yesterday you tried

to deny that you were slapping a user fee, a tax, on women and children who have to utilize the Family Responsibility Office to collect child-support payments. Then you went outside of this chamber and tried to make excuses for that tax, that user fee, on women and children who are already struggling. This morning, you changed your story again.

Minister, this situation is a disgrace. It is wrong, it is unfair and it's mean-spirited to go after those women and children. Will you reverse your decision?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As the member opposite knows, if he has had an opportunity to check his facts in the last 24 hours or so, all the fees being proposed would be paid by the payors and not by those persons who are entitled to payments, who usually are women and children. He would know that and should, I suggest, be cautious about suggesting otherwise, because it is a serious issue and does cause worry to families in Ontario that are entitled to those payments.

There is one exception, and that is the proposed \$25 fee to obtain a written statement, which would be levied if it were requested by a payee. But there is an alternative in place for that. The individual can call, use the automated system and get a balance. If they need detailed information, they can speak to one of the persons who work at the Family Responsibility Office.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, you had better check your facts. Because the facts are that women will have to pay a \$25 fee when they need a schedule A to prove to Revenue Canada how much support they received last year. They have to pay \$25 for a schedule A to see if the FRO is making cost-of-living adjustments when they're supposed to. Then they'll have to pay a \$100 fee to the FRO to make the COLA adjustment to the court order. They'll have to pay another \$100 for FRO staff to adjust support payments when a new court order is filed. They'll have to pay another \$100 to adjust their support payments to receive money owed to them from the time that a judge orders payments to be made in court to the time when the FRO finally registers that order, which is usually a delay of two to three months.

In every, single one of these cases, which happens every day, day in, day out at the FRO, you're going to force women and children to pay new fees and taxes for a responsibility that your government has to deliver these services.

Minister, why are you so intent on pushing these women and children into even deeper poverty?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Everything the honourable member opposite just said is wrong, with the exception of the \$25 fee that I've already described. I don't believe the honourable member makes the decisions with respect to policy at the Family Responsibility Office. I can assure the members of this House that in the fact sheet, which we have distributed to the members of this House, we have accurately set out precisely those fees that are proposed to be levied.

All the taxpayers of Ontario are paying for the services of the Family Responsibility Office. We want to improve those services. The phones are being answered more quickly now than they were before. More calls are being taken: 2,100 calls were answered in October, which is 20% more than two years ago. The phones are being answered more quickly than before. Record amounts of money are being collected for the women and children of Ontario families. That's what is important. That's the issue.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): And record arrears have been accumulating in the three years since you've dismantled the eight regional offices, and thousands and thousands more women and their kids are not getting even the support payments that are being paid into the office because of your mismanagement, your negligence, your incompetence and your disdain for the women and children of this province.

You have imposed new user fees, new taxes, on some of the poorest people in our province: women who are compelled to obtain hard copy schedule A for any number of reasons. There is absolutely no justification for this unfair and unjust imposition of new costs, new taxes on the people who can least afford it. Stand up today and tell us now that your policy of user fees, new taxes for women and kids receiving support payments is going to be terminated here and now.

1500

Hon Mr Flaherty: Once again, I think it's important for those families in Ontario entitled to these benefits to know that what the honourable member is stating is inaccurate. The only new fee with respect to payees is that \$25 fee for a written statement. That information is obtainable from FRO for free, without charge, by telephone.

I think the honourable member obviously would want us to have an enforcement fee for those payors who refuse to pay after being asked to pay, where extraordinary efforts have to be taken. I think the taxpayers of Ontario would not expect that they would have to bear the cost of those extraordinary enforcement efforts. There will be a fee in that regard of \$400 payable by those who are shirking their family obligations.

IMPAIRED DRIVERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Solicitor General. You made some tough announcements today regarding penalties for drivers who flee police in chases. But you're not so tough on drunk drivers and other people who drive repeatedly while their licence is under suspension, because, you see, section 11, schedule R, of your red tape bill lets you reduce the period that the cars of people who are driving repeatedly while under suspension are impounded. What you've done is made it easier on people who repeatedly drive under suspension while their licence has been revoked by virtue of the Highway Traffic Act. You've gotten real

soft on suspended drivers, drunk drivers. Was it the fact that you were merely asleep at the switch or are you really giving a gift at Christmastime to drunk drivers here in the province of Ontario?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): First of all, our province has the toughest rules on impaired driving in the country. We have penalties that call for life suspensions of drivers' licences after your third offence. You have a suspension after a second offence. We have tough penalties. We strongly believe in the fight against drunk driving. We have already doubled the funding for the RIDE program in this province from 1995, up to \$1.2 million currently.

This morning I was at the launch of the festive RIDE program, at which we had a number of the police chiefs across the GTA and also all the advocates in this area, clearly on side in our fight against drunk driving. The province was applauded by almost everyone in terms of the tough measures that we've brought in to make sure that drunk drivers are penalized by way of losing their licences in Ontario, and the fines.

Mr Kormos: Solicitor General, I'd suggest that you please read section 11, schedule R, of your red tape bill. Right now, if you drive while your licence is suspended, your car can be impounded for 45 days, the second time around it's impounded for 90 days and the third time around for 180 days. That's the law as it stands. But your amendment in your red tape bill lets you wipe out the 90- and 180-day impoundments and lets these drivers get away with a mere 45 days, no matter how many times they've been caught driving under suspension. You claim to be serious about road safety? Is this an early Christmas present to drunk drivers? Tell us that section 11, schedule R, is going to be repealed.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: When I tell you that we have the toughest penalties against drunk drivers in the country, we do. We're talking about suspensions of licences. We want to get these people off the street. And when we can call for a lifetime ban against somebody driving in this province, I think it is a very serious thing. We also continue to fund, as I said before, the RIDE program, where we work with police officers to make sure that people who drive while they're impaired are not only given licence suspensions but also have to pay in jail time. It is important for us to get people off the street, because no amount, not one case of drunk driving, is acceptable to this government.

FOOD BANKS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday in the Legislature, the member for Brampton Centre introduced a bill called the Food Bank Accountability Act. The introduction of this bill was a lazy and insulting attack on all food banks across this province. Food banks were not consulted prior to the introduction of this bill. I remind you that food banks receive no funding whatsoever from this government, and they provide a valuable service.

This bill will force this government to bring in inspectors to go after food banks and their operations. It provides for \$25,000 fines and jail terms. It's a disgusting, disgraceful attack on food banks across this province. It is an attack on the volunteers, on the people who donate and on the staff.

On the behalf of your government, do you believe in the intent of this bill and, if not, will you ask your member to withdraw it?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think the member is referring to a private member's bill, and I think every member in this House respects the right of a member to bring forward a private member's bill.

Mr Agostino: I found it amazing that the minister, representing the Premier today, did not take this opportunity to move his government away from this bill. Clearly, the timing of this is horrible, it is disgraceful. As we approach Christmas and difficult times for food banks, this member of your government decides to attack food banks in a sleazy manner. I'm asking you again—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): —a point of order.

The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino: It is a sleazy, dirty attack on food banks.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

I ask the member to withdraw the word "sleazy," please.

Mr Agostino: I withdraw.

Clearly—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): Does the member withdraw his entire comments?

The Speaker: I asked him to withdraw.

The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino: Again, Acting Premier, you have an opportunity here. You can either stand by this bill, which implicates your government into supporting this bill and what is there, or you can, on behalf of your government, distance yourself from this bill. As I said earlier, as we approach Christmas, food banks need our help. They don't need to be kicked in the head. They don't need to be beaten up. This is a difficult time for them. What your government and your member have done is, in my view, disgraceful. You're talking about bringing police in, you're talking about charging food banks. We're not talking here about a few operators who are not food bank operators but basically rip-off artists. We're talking about food banks who do a service and provide service—

The Speaker: The member's time is up. It was well over a minute, I'm sorry.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'll be a little lenient this time, but I won't in the future. Very quickly, please.

Mr Agostino: Again, to the Acting Premier, will you, on behalf of your government, apologise to the food bank operators, volunteers, staff and users across this province for the introduction of this bill?

Hon Mr Hodgson: If the position of the member opposite or the Liberal Party is that they want to do away with the right of members to introduce private members' bills, he should talk to his House leader and propose that. Maybe he can bring in his own private member's bill to do away with the rights of members in this Legislative Assembly.

What I think is important to note is that he will have an opportunity to debate it and hear what the member has to say. It will be fully debated in this Legislature.

If the member is talking about what this government's record is, it's a record of growth, a record of jobs; it's trying to make sure that we have an investment climate in this province where people will create jobs and help everyone in society to create their own opportunities and live happy lives. It has improved this province. That's our record, and that's why it contrasts so much with the Liberal record.

1510

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the minister responsible for children. We've all been hearing reports lately in the news media about the state of child poverty in our country and particularly in Ontario. For example, the statistics I heard yesterday regarding the Campaign 2000 national report card seem grossly exaggerated. I've received numerous phone calls from my constituents in Scarborough Southwest regarding this issue. I'd like to ask the minister to clarify our government's response to these reports and the statistics upon which they're based.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank this member very much for this question. I really have been waiting for this question all week from the opposition, as a matter of fact. It's a very important question, and by their attendance this afternoon in the House I guess they're not interested in question period at all.

I've been reading these reports, and they have been very disturbing. Any child living in poverty is a serious concern for our government, but these kinds of exaggerated statistics distort reality and do a grave disservice to all children and families across this country. Many studies and reports on child poverty, including Campaign 2000's national report card, use the Statistics Canada low-income cut-off, LICO, to measure child poverty.

Statistics Canada itself insists that LICOs are not intended to be a poverty line. The United Nations also refused this measure of child poverty, and in its recent report it indicates 6% of Canadians are living in poverty, the second-lowest level among major industrial nations and one third the rate that the LICO measure would suggest.

Maryanne Webber, who is director of income statistics at Statistics Canada, says there is no—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Supplementary.

Mr Newman: As a supplementary to the same minister, obviously we're all concerned about child poverty. In my very own riding of Scarborough Southwest, there's one example where unfortunately some children live in poverty. I believe that having one child in poverty in this province is one too many. Minister, can you tell me what specific measures our government is taking to reduce child poverty across our province?

Hon Mrs Marland: This government takes all forms of poverty seriously, including child poverty. We believe that the best way of improving the lives of these children is to improve the lives of their parents and families by creating an environment where they can have jobs and be financially independent. Since Mike Harris took office in 1995, well over half a million net new jobs have been created in Ontario and more than 451,000 people have ended their dependence on the welfare system, and that number includes 190,000 children.

We are moving forward and taking action, but there is still more work to be done, and our commitment to these children is clear: We have an Ontario child care supplement for working families that helps 350,000 children.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Marland: But finally, what I would like to say, over the heckling of the Liberal members, is that we must all—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale come to order, please. The minister's time is almost up.

Hon Mrs Marland: What we must all remember is that this is not about numbers, it's about real children. The Mike Harris government is—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. Order. New question.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): In the absence of the Minister of Health, I'll ask my question of the Minister of Northern Development.

Minister, I met last Saturday morning in my constituency office with representatives of the Kidney Foundation. They came to talk about the concerns of people from northwestern Ontario communities who have to leave their homes for dialysis and kidney transplants. If someone from my community needs to have a kidney transplant, it can cost them over \$9,000 for the patient cost and the cost of a companion donor. Then they pay again for the follow-up visits that are needed. The northern health travel grant pays a maximum of \$420 to offset these costs. The Kidney Foundation can help a very little bit with patients most financially in need, and ironically they tend to be people on government social assistance.

Minister, I ask whether you think it is fair and right that someone from my northern community who needs to have a kidney transplant should have to pay \$9,000 to get one. If you do not think that's fair or right, will you join with me in urging the Minister of Health to review the

northern health travel grant and ensure there is equitable access to health care for people in this province?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I had the opportunity, as members of this House may be aware, to serve with Minister Witmer as her parliamentary assistant in the period 1997 to 1999 and have been very pleased with the opportunity to work with Minister Witmer and to know of her commitment to increasing access to health care services throughout Ontario and, importantly as well, into northern Ontario.

The expansion of kidney dialysis services across the province is a goal that has had a great deal of gains, and we'll continue to support the provision of access to services across the province. Important too, the strategy of putting emphasis on improving access to services in the north makes a great deal of sense. To allow people to have access to care closer to home in the hospitals, whether it be in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie or small towns across northern Ontario, is the goal, and it's a goal that I'll support. I'll keep working with Minister Witmer and as well through my ministry and the heritage fund to support access to primary care and other types of health care in northern Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: If this Minister of Northern Development supports the right to equitable access to health care in northern Ontario, he's got some work to do, because in every single letter that I have had from the Minister of Health and to every single letter that my colleagues have written on their constituents' behalf, the answer back has been, "This government has no intention of changing the northern health travel grant." It is time for the Minister of Northern Development to look at this. It's not just that the grant is inadequate, it's the fact that it's administered in a way that makes people beg for the little bit of help they're going to get.

I want to provide just one example. A constituent of mine, Mr George Delmo, was referred to Dr Guzman of Winnipeg for the repair of an aneurysm. Dr Guzman is on the Ministry of Health referral list, but Mr Delmo's application for that minimal northern health travel grant has been denied because the surgeon who actually did the surgery on referral from Dr Guzman is not on your government's list. He's a fully qualified vascular surgeon, he's recognized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba, but because he doesn't make your list he's denied the money.

Minister, if you believe that northerners should have equal access to health care, will you make the case to the Minister of Health to review the cases of Mr Delmo and to review the arbitrary rules and restrictions on the northern health travel grant?

Hon Mr Hudak: I'm very pleased at all times to continue to work with Minister Witmer to bring the views that I have heard from northerners to her desk on approving access to health care in northern Ontario and throughout the other parts of the province. In fact, over 100,000 applications for the northern Ontario health travel grant were approved in 1998 and 1999.

I thought I'd point out as well to this House that the mechanics for applying for the travel grant are the same under this government as they were under the previous Liberal and NDP governments. I think that's an important point to bring up. They had their chance in power to change that grant. They didn't make that change and are calling for that change now.

In terms of the work that has been done supporting the minister's work from the heritage fund, I was in Thunder Bay not too long ago for the improvements in the Northern Academic Health Sciences Network, which links up the Thunder Bay and Sudbury hospitals with about 30 other health care clinics across northern Ontario to help bring better care, to help eliminate that isolation that doctors can often feel in northern Ontario, and to ensure that diagnoses and such are improved. That's just one of many commitments in addition to the \$70,000 recently announced for—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. New question.

MAYOR OF TORONTO

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, I've been reading with great interest recent media coverage surrounding Mayor Lastman's latest crusade, I guess we could call it, entitled Operation Save Toronto.

Apparently the mayor believes that the people of Toronto would be better served if the city were to secede from the rest of the province of Ontario.

Minister, as the Minister of Labour and also of course as a member from Toronto, you must have some serious concerns, as do I, about what impact such secession would have on all of the good, hard-working people of Toronto. I wonder if you could explain to us what implications such secession would have on job security in Ontario.

1520

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much for the question. It's difficult to actually consider exactly what is driving Mr Lastman on this particular issue. Being a resident of the city of Toronto, I understand the benefits etc of belonging to the province of Ontario. Asking me to get inside the mayor's head and explain what his rationale is for providing this kind of fodder for the media, it makes little, if any, sense in my opinion.

Obviously, we know full well that if he is going to pursue this particular agenda, it's going to cost the taxpayers of Toronto money. I think before he goes around spending money on legal fees—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): How is this a labour issue?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I hear the member for Oakwood bellowing over there. I presume he supports this secessionist action. I'm not sure why he would. I remember when the member was a secessionist for the city of York, as a matter of fact, so that doesn't surprise me too much.

I think when we analyze the situation, we know the benefits in being in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that illustrious and versatile response. According to today's Toronto Star article, the city's latest—

Interjections.

Ms Mushinski: Obviously the Liberals over there, since there are only eight of them in the House, don't consider this to be a particularly important issue, but it's certainly of importance to constituents in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

The mayor claims that the secession would allow Toronto to actually reduce its taxes considerably. My interest is in preserving and protecting job security and taxes. Could you elaborate on how you believe secession will actually accomplish that goal?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First, there is an argument with respect to the issue of the city of Toronto receiving or taking benefits from the province of Ontario, and who benefits from whose association—northern, eastern, western parts of this province. I think together we are a far better province than we would be individually. Each of us has opportunities to bring something to the table that benefits everybody in Ontario.

I think before Mr Lastman continues on this bit of tilting at windmills, maybe he would want to consult his own council, because I'm not so sure his own council would support such folly. I'm fairly certain the people of the city of Toronto would probably not support such folly either. In fact, he started musings about the GTA. I had an opportunity to speak to some of mayors locally, including the mayor of Mississauga and a couple of chairmen. They were never consulted on this tack that he was choosing to take.

The flat out fact is that Toronto is benefiting from being in Ontario. There are a lot of benefits. There are costs that we incur. I think rather than wasting taxpayers' money on this kind of stuff, he should spend more time working on bettering his position, balancing his budget and dealing with—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): My question is to the Minister of Housing. You would know that today the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp issued a report that's long been awaited, the rent market survey that we get every year. You would know, as the Minister of Housing—because I'm sure you read it, as I did—that we're seeing vacancies going down across Ontario. In other words, we have lower vacancy rates in communities like Hamilton, Toronto and others, but what's more interesting is that rent increases are more than double what is allowed under your rent control legislation.

It's a simple question: Would you now admit that your vacancy decontrol legislation is not working, as it's

allowing increases way over what you're allowing under your legislation?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It's quite the opposite. Indeed, as the honourable member well knows, the province-wide cap is 2.6%, which is the lowest in 25 years. But because of some vestiges that were left over from NDP and Liberal legislation, there are some landlords who get an addition to that cap. We've been trying to phase that out as quickly as possible but unfortunately there are some rights that still reside with the landlords in this area that you don't want to take away, because there will be a charter challenge or what have you. We've been trying to get away from the NDP legislation as quickly as possible, but some things take a little bit longer. I apologize for that.

Mr Bisson: Minister, that's the nicest tongue-in-cheek answer I've seen in this House in a long time. That's a good joke; that was funny; we all had a good laugh. But the reality is that it's your government, under the previous term, that allowed vacancy decontrol. Under the NDP, you would know, there was an actual fixed cap that rents were able to go up every year. Why do we know? Because that was the norm. But quite frankly your caucus, when you were in opposition as the third party, railed at the fact that the NDP actually put in place real rent controls that put on real caps.

Under the vacancy decontrol system that you now have, when somebody moves out of an apartment a landlord can boost the rent to whatever he or she desires. That's why we're seeing rents go above what your supposed cap is. Minister, will you at least admit that your system doesn't work and it's a sop to landlords to allow them to increase rents to the point that renters can't afford?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member made a reference to "real rent control." If real rent control means a complete lack of affordable housing being created by the marketplace in our society, I'm against that kind of rent control. If real rent control means that people who are coming to our province looking for jobs, looking for prosperity, looking for opportunity, don't have an adequate housing supply, I'm against that NDP policy. So maybe we're on the same side; I don't know. All I know is that the system, when we got here, was broken. We're fixing it as quickly as we can. Five years of wrong policies by his government and another five years of wrong policies by the previous government take a little bit of time to fix, but we're doing it as quickly as we can. Maybe with the honourable member's help we could do it even more quickly.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Today the Federation of Ontario Naturalists has asked that the Premier give responsibility for protecting the Oak Ridges moraine over to the Minister of Natural

Resources. If I can quote from their press release, they say:

"...Municipal Affairs Minister Tony Clement won't do the job....

"Clement's claim that voluntary guidelines are working is contradicted by the facts. Municipalities, conservation groups and moraine landowners all want tighter controls on development. Clement just doesn't get it."

Minister, yesterday I told you about water being permanently in peril because of unbridled development. We're about to lose 70,000 hectares of good farmland because of unbridled development. Now the Federation of Ontario Naturalists is saying you won't do the job. Will you do the right thing and give over the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine to a ministry that might protect the moraine and its precious resources?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Our goal is a long-term solution. The honourable member's caucus obviously did not believe in that. That's not his fault in particular, but at the time they did not act except to approve the official plan. Our goal is to preserve the environmental integrity of the moraine. That's our goal. Our goal is to preserve the groundwater and the aquifers so that they will not be denuded, they will not be depleted. That's our goal. That's why we've changed the policies we inherited, to ensure that the permit-to-take-water system has strict rules in place so that every single drop of water that is applied to be taken out of the moraine or out of the aquifer or out of the groundwater supplies has to be scientifically proven to be replenishable before my government will act to approve that kind of permit. That's our policy; that's our commitment. I stand by those commitments. I'm willing to work with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and all the other groups to make sure the environmental and ecological integrity is preserved for our generation and for future generations as well. That's my commitment.

Mr Colle: As the Federation of Ontario Naturalists says, you don't get it. It's your unwillingness to stop all this development that's going to imperil the water supply. There are 55,000 people about to go on the moraine. As we speak, there are 14 developments that will split the moraine in half in Richmond Hill if you don't do anything. Your own report says that urban expansion and the associated expansions of sewer and water create a real possibility that the potential to obtain clean water will be permanently lost. Naturalists are saying you're not doing the job. Naturalists are saying you're not doing the job. The agricultural community is saying you're not doing the job. The 200 delegates to the clean water summit said "unbridled development." They have asked for a freeze on development. You have said no to all of them. All you're saying yes to are the developers.

Do the right thing. Step aside. Give over protection of the moraine to the minister next to you. Do the right thing. Give it up. Let someone else do the job.

1530

Hon Mr Clement: Again, our goal is to protect the environmental integrity of the moraine. That remains our

goal and has always been our goal. That is the goal that we are pursuing. We're pursuing it a lot more aggressively than your government did when they were in power. That's the fact. That was recognized.

Let's take a little bit of time to look at your plan for the moraine, because I did review your plan: quick fix; doesn't solve any of the problems; publicity stunt. That's why I rejected your plan. I defend that. I would say that if you want a plan that is for the long-term protection of the moraine, your plan is just not up to the job.

IMMIGRANT TRAINING

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): My question is directed to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It concerns the whole issue of access and training for newcomers to this country and particularly to Ontario.

When you look at the problems faced by newcomers in this country and the immigration mess that has been created for newcomers by the federal government, could you tell us what type of specific Ontario government initiatives and services have helped to improve access and quality of training to newcomers in this province in contrast to the federal government's lackadaisical approach on the whole issue of immigration and training?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): With respect to the question from my colleague from Etobicoke North, I know that I've already stated in this House today the commitment of this government to assisting immigrants in accessing their trade or profession where they really are qualified and totally committed to doing the job. I personally feel it has been the inadequacies of the former two governments, which didn't moved quickly in this regard.

In 1995, this government made the access to professions and trades project a permanent unit of the government, reflecting our commitment to addressing this issue. Through a number of actions from 1995 to 1999, over that period of time—and I say "action." I'm not talking here about anything but action. We've now sought proposals. We're reviewing those proposals to create an academic credentials assessment service that will help newcomers to Ontario by quickly and fairly evaluating—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr Hastings: At least we're moving in the right direction in terms of helping newcomers to integrate into this society, to make a fully effective economic contribution to this province.

Not only is it that, but it's an issue of training. I'd like to know from the minister, where is our government going in terms of trying to help these newcomers in terms of access and training so they can get the good jobs in this kind of economy, in contrast to the federal government's perpetual foot-dragging on the whole training and access issue? That's what I would like to know.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The member from Etobicoke is absolutely correct. My parliamentary assistant, the

member from Thornhill, spoke eloquently in the House this morning. She actually felt that she could not support the motion from the other side because it was only about principles and not action. It was all about talk. It was all about what the government has gone far beyond accomplishing—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Take your seat. Minister.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I really think there must be something going on. If the Liberal members want to make a contribution in this area, they can do exactly what the member from Etobicoke North has decided.

We don't have a training agreement. As we speak, many newcomers to Canada do not have access to training. We are the only province without a training agreement. We need our fair share. We give the federal government \$8 billion in EI money; they give us back \$4 billion for training and wage replacement. That is unfair. We're standing up for those new immigrants—

The Speaker: Order. Would the minister take her seat. I'm sorry, the minister's time is up.

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask you about the situation of the children that you've abandoned in this province, special-needs children. On your watch you've allowed people across the province—in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Thunder Bay, Windsor, Ottawa, in boards all over the province, in Hamilton, in Windsor, there are children like the Youmans child who have had their assistance to be educated cut. They've had their educational opportunity taken away from them because of your cuts in special education.

Minister, you've stood in this House and tried to say you've given them more money, but the superintendents, the supervisors running the boards all across the province have agreed it's because you've taken money away that these children are abandoned. You are at fault. You are responsible for these children not getting an education in this province. Will you agree today that you will act and restore the funding that they need?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I don't know how many times the member wants to ask this question. He asked it about 16 times yesterday in estimates, and my answer to him yesterday at estimates was the same answer as it was several times before in the Legislature.

First of all, we have not cut special-education funding. The supervisory officers did not claim that. Secondly, we increased special-education funding in this province last year and this year. Thirdly, we instituted a new policy for delivering that money that was recommended to us by boards and experts in the field. Finally, it is the boards which are making the decisions about the supports out there for those students, as he well knows.

I have also said to the honourable member repeatedly that we understand, we recognize, we accept the views from parents and the boards that we need to work together to fix challenges that are facing us in making this money, the more money, the new policy, work better, and we have undertaken to do that.

Mr Kennedy: This minister has been sitting in that chair since the summertime and has not responded at all to the needs of the boards across the province, the needs of the children across the province. The boards have told this minister that \$106 million was effectively cut from their budgets. In fact, I have here their report that says exactly that.

Minister, in your own riding in Durham, 23% less money was made available by your ministry than they used to spend under the old funding formula. In addition, there are children who are being forced to stay at home, directly as a result of what you're doing.

If you like—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Government members, please come to order. Member.

Mr Kennedy: There are members across laughing. Each of their ridings, every single one—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Stop the clock.

Order. Minister of Labour, come to order, please. The member for Kitchener Centre, come to order, please.

Start the clock. Member.

Mr Kennedy: The laughter of the members opposite is just a clue to the attitude that leaves 68 out of 72 boards having less money. In other words, virtually every one of these members' boards has less money than they require for special-needs students.

We are now three months into the education year. I want to ask this minister: She's busy cutting money from education; will she pledge to resolve this situation before Christmas? Will she make sure that special-needs children, like the Youmans child, who have lost 50% of their support, will get the support they need? Will you make that undertaking today?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I find it highly offensive what the honourable member would claim, that somehow or other members on this side of the House do not appreciate, do not understand and do not respect the challenges that families are facing out there—highly offensive.

1540

Secondly, the supervisory officers have made a statement about what they believe they are spending in addition to our special education funding—not that there is less spending because, as I have said very clearly, there is an increase in funding. We based our numbers on what the boards told us they were spending. So if they now claim that what they told us is wrong, they should perhaps say that.

Finally, the reason the Durham Board of Education is not spending as much on special education this year as they did last year—by their own admission at public meetings with parents, which I was at, not the member—

was because they increased the compensation package for their teachers. That's their claim.

We have given the boards more money because we knew they needed it for special education.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. I'm sorry.

Applause.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, the time for oral questions is over.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to be recorded as standing to be recognized prior to the end of question period.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. I've heard the point of order. I'm sorry, the clapping continued and took the member's time. It was unfortunate. I'm sorry.

PETITIONS

HENLEY ROWING COURSE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas the Henley rowing course in St Catharines is an outstanding rowing facility which has for several decades been the site of hundreds of international rowing competitions;

"Whereas the World Rowing Championship has been held in St Catharines in 1970 and 1999 and has been declared an outstanding success on both occasions;

"Whereas the municipal, provincial and federal governments, along with generous private donors, invested several million dollars in the upgrading of the Henley rowing course to enable the 1999 World Rowing Championship to be held in St Catharines and that as a result the Henley is a first-class rowing facility;

"Whereas the organizing committee of the World Rowing Championship, the annual Royal Canadian Henley Regatta and other prestigious regattas, has the proven expertise to operate major, international rowing competitions;

"Whereas all taxpayers in Ontario will be compelled to contribute to any financial assistance provided by the Ontario government for the Olympic bid for the city of Toronto;

"Whereas the creation of a new rowing facility outside of St Catharines for the Toronto Olympic bid would result in the unnecessary expenditure of millions of dollars to duplicate the St Catharines rowing facility;

"Whereas the rowing facility for several Olympic Games has been located outside the sponsoring and host city;

"We, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to persuade the Toronto Olympic bid committee to pro-

pose the Henley rowing course in St Catharines as a site of the rowing competition for the 2008 Olympic Games."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition, which I think is in order.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, I guess I am not being recognized to ask a question.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it does follow the new protocol where the table clears petitions so that they are in order. So it is in order, and I am presenting it on behalf of the member for Leeds-Grenville, who happens to be my member.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas eight-year-old child Kayla Welch is deaf;

"Whereas North Edwardsburg Public School (NEPS), Kayla's school, has no presence of a principal for child discipline;

"Whereas at NEPS allocation of a vice-principal is six hours per week;

"Whereas Kayla was completely ostracized at NEPS because of her disability due to schoolyard bullies whose behaviour went unchecked for at least months; and

"Whereas an effort was made by the Upper Canada school board to rectify this problem; however, it remains unresolved because the board is having difficulty staffing principals in small rural schools under 300 students because of the funding formula for administrative staff allocation, ie, 2.75 principals per 1,000 students;

"Whereas Kayla receives only one hour per week of a teacher of the deaf;

"Whereas Kayla is entitled to a minimum of 1.5 hours per day under ISA funding;

"Whereas the board did not apply for ISA funding on behalf of Kayla for 1998-99;

"Whereas the board is freezing ISA funding at this year's level; therefore Kayla can't get funding for the next school year even if the board does apply;

"Whereas the board is unable to provide sufficient services for the deaf in small rural schools because of the province's spending formula requiring clustered services for deaf children;

"Whereas the board is having difficulty hiring teachers of the deaf because the province cut out the Sir James Whitney training program for teachers of the deaf three years ago;

"Whereas the Ministry of Education and Training claims that they have no mandate to ensure a safe school placement for school children;

"Whereas Thomas Welch and Jane Scharf have had to withdraw their daughter Kayla from school to protect her emotionally and physically;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to act in the interest of the deaf child Kayla Welch to ensure her schoolyard safety, and as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray."

It's a very long petition. Thank you for giving me permission to read it.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My petition is to the Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas early in September of 1995 there occurred a series of events involving the Premier of Ontario and members of his government, the Ontario Provincial Police and demonstrators representing members of the First Nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park;

"Whereas the events led to the death of Dudley George, one of the First Nations demonstrators;

"Whereas these events have raised concerns among all parties in the Legislature and many Ontarians;

"Whereas there has been introduced in the House a piece of legislation known as the Truth About Ipperwash Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"In order that there is an answer to concerns of the Legislature and Ontarians regarding the events at Ipperwash, the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in favour of the Truth About Ipperwash Act."

I affix my signature to that.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: During question period the Minister of Labour, in response to a question from the member for Scarborough Centre, I believe quoted from a document; I think he said the analysis done on the separation of Toronto into a separate province. I wonder if you could have that analysis tabled for the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know that the rules are if a member quotes from it extensively. I did not hear him quoting from that extensively, so it is not a point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Mr Runciman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 11, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting four new Acts / Projet de loi 11, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant quatre nouvelles lois.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I believe we have unanimous consent to split this afternoon's time among the three parties. I don't hear any disagreement with that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is that agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Runciman: The Red Tape Commission defines red tape as any government procedure, policy or customer service that gets in the way of doing business and creating jobs. It's not only about regulation and legislation, it's also about licences, permits, approvals, standards and registration. It's about filing and certification requirements, guidelines, procedures, paperwork and enforcement practices.

1550

Each piece of red tape may be small and, by itself, may have little impact, but when there are dozens, or even hundreds, of such requirements, sometimes unnecessary or of very limited value, they can form a huge impediment to business in this province. It costs business time and money and it can seriously delay the launching of new products and services. Clearly, there's no place in a modern economy, in Ontario or anywhere else, for red tape.

This government has achieved considerable success in the battle against red tape.

Previous red tape reduction bills have, for example, made changes to allow mutual insurance corporations to hold annual shareholders meetings within the first three months rather than the first two months of every calendar year.

We've amended the Liquor Licence Act to eliminate unnecessary delays in granting of a liquor sales licence while maintaining regulatory control.

We've made changes to the Theatres Act to get films and videos into circulation faster.

We've removed a list of prescribed investments for trust funds and instead introduced a prudent trustee standard allowing more flexibility to invest funds and maximize income for beneficiaries.

Cuts in red tape have also benefited the consumer by streamlining government services and requirements. For example, the Corporations Act has been amended to allow not-for-profit corporations other than charitable corporations to dispense with an annual audit if annual income is less than \$10,000 and all their members consent in writing. Not-for-profit corporations can include, for example, hockey and bowling leagues and community centres.

The Loan Brokers Act was amended to strengthen the legislation to deal with unscrupulous loan brokers.

The bill before you today is the latest government attack on red tape. If passed, it would make more than 200 amendments to acts in more than a dozen different ministries.

At the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, it would amend the Consumer Protection Act to improve the cost of credit disclosure information. This would allow consumers to compare the costs of leasing versus borrowing when looking for a new car or truck. The Consumer Protection Act would also be amended to expand consumers' rights when buying products or services from a door-to-door salesperson. This includes

extending the cooling off period to 10 days from two days.

Also at the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Registry Act would be amended to allow consumers to register notarial copies of documents made from microfiche. Currently, only original documents can be registered. Consumers would be able to provide a funeral director's certificate or a notarial copy of a death certificate issued by a doctor when registering a will. Currently, only a death certificate issued by a doctor is accepted.

Other ministries have similarly important proposals in the bill before you today. I'm sure my colleagues will be happy to answer any questions relating to their responsibilities, but I'd like to mention just a few.

At the Ministry of Agriculture, repeal of the Artificial Insemination of Livestock Act would promote development of a more competitive business climate. It would remove barriers that have discouraged existing companies from expanding and prevented new companies from entering the business. Livestock producers would benefit from a greater choice of service providers and products at competitive prices.

At the Ministry of the Attorney General, amendments to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act would streamline the hearings process. These amendments would also provide agencies, boards and tribunals with alternative ways to resolve issues that come before them.

At the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, amendments to the Archives Act would correct translation errors in the French language version of the act.

At the Ministry of Community and Social Services, administrative amendments to the Day Nurseries Act and Ontario Works Act of 1997 would clarify the responsibility of municipalities entering agreements with those delivering services.

At the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Technology Centres Act, the Ontario Telephone Development Corporation Act and the Massey-Ferguson Limited Act of 1981 would be repealed. These acts have not been used in at least a decade and have no current relevance.

At the Ministry of Finance, the Ontario Financial Services Commission amendments would, among other things, allow the financial services industry to provide better consumer protection and customer service. They would also make credit requirements consistent with those of other Ontario ministries and other jurisdictions.

At the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, amendments to the Ambulance Act would be made to reflect the recommendations of the Land Ambulance Transition Task Force. One of my colleagues will be speaking more at length to that particular issue.

At the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, amending the Building Code Act, 1992, would provide the minister with the authority to give province-wide effect to decisions of the Building Code Commission.

This would reduce the need for applicants to make repeat applications on matters that have already been reviewed.

At the Ministry of Natural Resources, amendments to the Fish Inspection Act would toughen fines and lengthen the maximum jail term for offenders.

At the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, amendments to the Mining Act would include removing the requirement to use red ink when filing a mining claim. These amendments would also eliminate the burdensome requirements of using prescribed forms—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would seek unanimous consent to have all the questions for question period next week given to the government members.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): I don't think that's a point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Runciman: I'm looking forward to next week.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Hold it. On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that the last unanimous consent be withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent be withdrawn? Agreed.

See how much power you have, member from St Catharines. You just walk in and the whole thing changes.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Are you looking for more speakers?

Hon Mr Runciman: Look what you tried to do.

I was speaking about amendments to the Mining Act under the red tape legislation.

These amendments will also eliminate the burdensome requirement of using prescribed forms or registered mail for filing or sending certain documents.

At the Ministry of the Solicitor General, amendments to the Emergency Powers Act, 1993, would ensure there is clear authority for communities to formulate and implement emergency plans in the face of an impending emergency. Having gone through the ice storm, I know how important this particular amendment will be.

At the Ministry of Transportation, an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act would allow Ontario to join the international registration plan, integrating Ontario's commercial vehicle registration program with that used by US states. This would ease the movement of Ontario registered trucks and buses across North America.

At the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the number of members of the Ontario Educational Communications Authority could be fewer than the 13 members now required. Also, the Lieutenant Governor in Council could appoint a person other than the chair of the authority as the chief executive officer of the authority.

At Management Board Secretariat, amending the Official Notices Publication Act would enable the Queen's Printer for Ontario to publish notices and information in the Ontario Gazette in addition to what is re-

quired by law. Management Board Secretariat is also proposing a merger of the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp. This would continue the sharing of knowledge and expertise to deliver regulated, responsible and responsive lotteries and gaming in Ontario. At Management Board Secretariat, the Public Service Act would be amended to establish the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Much has been accomplished in the fight against red tape, but the battle is not over. Much more needs to be done, and this government is committed to continuing this work. This is an important bill, and I urge all members to support it.

1600

Mr O'Toole: It's my pleasure to follow the minister with respect to this important and long overdue piece of legislation. It certainly takes strong leadership to make difficult decisions, and that is really what has been missing in Ontario for some time.

I start with our commitment as far back as 1995. At that time, the Premier and his cabinet clearly empowered a group that involved Frank Sheehan, the member from Lincoln at that time; Marcel Beaubien; Jim Brown; Jack Carroll; Barb Fisher; Gary Fox; John Hastings; Tim Hudak; myself, John O'Toole from Durham, for the record; Joe Spina and Gary Stewart.

I know how hard those members worked, without one cent of additional cost to this government, and how hard they listened. In January 1997, they produced a report which outlined a number of important recommendations for this government and this cabinet to pursue. I can assure you that, under the careful stewardship of our capable House leader and the cabinet, we are doing exactly that. I could go through a number of the recommendations, and in the time allocated to me this afternoon I intend to do that.

It could be commented that this is a war on red tape, and it's vital to the prosperity of the province. It's vital because red tape is so pervasive that has a stranglehold on business, and that will be the primary focus of my remarks. Of course, I'll be sharing them with Mr Newman shortly, for those who are watching, perhaps Dan's father, Victor.

Red tape prevents business from fuelling the economy, providing people with much-needed jobs. The esteemed Fraser Institute, a well-known think-tank, estimated that government rules and regulations cost the Canadian economy \$85 billion in 1993-94. Imagine: These barriers are costing every Canadian household \$12,000. In a recent review I did, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that three of every 10 firms spent more than six hours on government paperwork. Clearly, that's a burden on small business. A government that listens and acts, responds.

Almost two of 10 CFIB businesses spent 10 hours or more a week. That amounts to an average of 7% of operating costs. That's another tax. Red tape and regulations are taxes. They're a burden. Can you imagine: In some cases, some businesses spend as much as 40% of their

time filling out forms and conforming to certain unnecessary duplications of bureaucratic waste.

The Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, led by David Lindsay, in a *Globe and Mail* article talked about "untangling the knots that strangle business." Clearly, their final report has been well embraced in the business community not just in Ontario; it's being shared with all Canadians.

An article published on November 23, 1998, states:

"As the recession of the 1980s eased and businesses began to grow again, many obstacles remained in the way of expansion and prosperity." Those obstacles are what this legislation is all about.

"By the mid-1990s, the government of Ontario had determined that one of the biggest was the Gordian knot of government red tape that was strangling plans for businesses to expand.

"So, as part of the Common Sense Revolution, the government established the Red Tape Commission to eliminate red tape barriers to investment."

The article went on to say: "For example, a recent study by the Canadian Chemical Producers Association found that a one-day delay in getting government legislation for a construction project could cost a company as much as \$140,000." That's just one day, because of delays of licensing and other permits.

"The study estimates that the industry's cost of doing business in Ontario is increased by \$50 million a year to meet environmental and labour requirements that do not improve" or demonstrate improvement in "environmental or health protection." Needless duplication.

"These costs have helped limit Ontario's share of the estimated \$55 billion the chemical industry is spending in North America to less than 1%."

Clearly there were labour legislation initiatives by the last government that helped, and work with the union leadership as well, to find a solution in that industry. That's a responsibility of government, to listen.

The burden of red tape is an onerous one indeed. The government recognizes the dead weight of unnecessary rules and regulations. Government is determined to lighten the load. The problem of red tape is not unique to this province. Red tape is common in many countries in the form of regulations to fulfill promises, respond to crises and to protect its citizens, so they say. But the weight of the legislative and regulatory requirements in Ontario and Canada in the last 20 years has indeed been demonstrated to be a burden. This burden discourages economic growth and development, which is why the government launched a war, a rage on red tape in 1995, and I can assure you it continues to this day.

A great deal has been accomplished. For example, 11 red tape reduction bills have already been passed, 28 acts repealed and 149 other acts amended. If you can imagine the work that has gone into it just to this point. The job is clearly not done.

More than 13,000 redundant and outdated regulations have been revoked. Requirements for film projectionists, for instance, to train for more than 800 hours were

repealed. Imagine that, in this age of computers, press a button—800 hours of training because of regulation. Other governments perhaps would have looked at increasing them, by having further kinds of barriers. This is more than is required for a helicopter operator. My son is a helicopter operator, and I'm sure that if he had 800 hours of training, he'd be qualified to operate a projector.

Time spent registering a new business, for instance, is another initiative by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. That has been reduced to 20 minutes from what was six weeks. Now that's responsiveness, and I think we should just dwell on that. Imagine, by streamlining and eliminating wasteful barriers, we've taken a six-week registration down to 20 minutes.

Mr Bradley: For what?

Mr O'Toole: Registering a small business. That's why we have over 600,000 net new jobs. I know it comes as a surprise to many that these were in fact barriers to jobs for people—for students, for young people, your family and mine—by slowing down the little store with the pizza oven that needed some regulation, some inspector to visit. Every week that they weren't operating was loss of investment. The list goes on. How it stops and the cost per hour are just not acceptable.

The hospitality industry can use credit cards now to purchase liquor, which has given them far more working capital, and with more working capital they can make more investments in their business, creating more jobs. Clearly, regulations effect job creation. This government knows, and it stands on its record. The greatly improved cash flow that resulted from this decision by the ministry reduces the capital outlay required. It's a very important economic stimulus, well accepted by the hospitality industry—the province's biggest employer, I might add—especially for young people entering the workforce for the first time. Creating jobs for youth is a strategic challenge at the federal level and at the provincial level. This is one small regulation change allowing the use of credit cards, freeing up working capital to create jobs—one small, effective decision made by this government which looks at the details and acts.

A quote from the *Globe and Mail* article earlier referred to the use of credit cards by licensees. It responds to the comments of one licensee who spent a minimum of \$8,000 a month at LCBO outlets. He said that the use of credit cards had tremendously improved his company's cash flow and he was looking to expand his business and create jobs. That's right from the *Globe and Mail*, the grey paper.

1610

The licensee was quoted as saying that this was good for business: "We're looking to grow in the future and having the increased cash flow will help us manage, plan and expand."

More examples: the elimination of more than 1,000 unnecessary annual licences, permits and reports in farm and food processing businesses; repealing the Sheep and Wool Marketing Act, which has not been used since 1985, when the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency was

established—we are sunseting regulations so that they have a regular review; amendments to the Ontario Energy Board Act to reduce regulatory costs and make utilities boost productivity; 11 forestry-related acts reduced to five; repealing outdated legislation to simplify and enhance forest protection.

Significant as these accomplishments are, I'm sure the Red Tape Commission would like to remind members that cutting red tape is only one of its roles. Its mandate is twofold: not only to work with the minister and cabinet, but to devise ways to prevent more red tape from being created in the future. Government does not want to continue pumping new rules and regulations to the detriment of business and indeed the public and the consumer.

A regulatory impact test, through which all new regulations must pass, will be put in place. This will ensure the tentacles of red tape do not grow faster than they are being cut.

The legislation being introduced today by our minister, Mr Runciman, will build on the successes. As I said earlier, cutting red tape is vital to the future of this very province. It is important, and I urge all members to support the bill. Give it your full support. You're talking about our collective futures and the economy of this province.

I want to take this opportunity to officially thank everyone associated with the Red Tape Commission, both outside and inside government. They're too numerous to mention on this occasion, but special thanks are due to our new commissioner, co-chair Bob Wood, the member from London West; Frank Sheehan, the former member from Lincoln; and the many people in various industries who have devoted time and energy to help the commission do its work. They have helped to identify problem areas and make the job of cutting red tape so productive and worthy.

There are also examples in a number of other areas where the Red Tape Commission is looking at the micro-level issues that affect small business. I have a couple that have come to my attention that I'd like to share with the House before I share my time with Mr Newman: for instance, allowing the restocking of mini-bars in our hotel rooms 24 hours a day; developing a user-friendly information package for employers in understanding pay equity; working with other provinces towards establishing common submissions of requirements for the pharmaceutical industry and for economic information; removing requirements for minimum room sizes in buildings except where requirements are necessary for health and safety reasons.

I'm confident that the work that continues to be done by the Red Tape Commission will help to create jobs, hope and opportunity for everyone in this province. I look forward to unanimous support of this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bradley: Can I share the time? So there are no two minuters?

I would like to offer my insights into this piece of legislation.

Hon Mr Runciman: My understanding is that we would use our block of time.

The Acting Speaker: OK. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): It's my pleasure to speak this afternoon on Bill 11, The Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999. It is certainly a very important piece of legislation.

The Red Tape Reduction Act contains changes which affect 12 separate ministries within Ontario. Legislation contained in this act will affect the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; the Ministry of the Attorney General; the Ministry of Community and Social Services; the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade; the Ministry of Finance; Management Board Secretariat; the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; the Ministry of Natural Resources; the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines; the Ministry of the Solicitor General; the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; the Ministry of Transportation; and of course the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

As a result, this rather large piece of legislation is 225 pages in length. I'd like to speak about a very important element of this bill, and that is schedule J, which deals with land ambulance. It's located on pages 129 to 146 of the bill.

I want to take a moment to inform members on both sides of the House of some of the things that have been going on within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Some time ago, the ministry and the Red Tape Review Commission set up the Land Ambulance Task Force. The purpose of the task force was to review and recommend a framework for the ambulance system in our province. The task force was well represented. It had representation from operator groups, municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, base hospitals, ambulance dispatch, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and other ministries as well. Through these working relationships, the task force has been able to bring forward many recommendations that we are confident will help us maintain a patient-focused, high-quality ambulance system that is accessible, accountable and responsive. That is our goal: to have an accessible, accountable and responsive ambulance service in our province.

A number of very important amendments to the Ambulance Act are proposed in this legislation. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, it is my pleasure to outline these changes to members here today in the Legislative Assembly.

The first amendment will change the current licensing scheme to a certification scheme. Bill 11, the new legislation we're debating here this afternoon, will introduce a new, competency-based certification scheme for ambulance service operators and replace the current licensing scheme. So we're going from a licensing scheme to a certification scheme in our province. This proposed scheme means Ontario will see a quality-based process that requires periodic recertification. This means we can

now confirm the competency of operators who will provide ambulance service to the people of Ontario. The details of the certification process will be spelled out via regulations. I can assure the members of this Legislature that the process will be quality based and designed to assure everyone that ambulance operators are willing and able to comply with those standards well before being allowed to operate an ambulance service. It is my firm belief that this change from a licensing system to a periodic recertification process will contribute to the excellence of ambulance services for Ontarians.

Another amendment contained in this legislation will empower the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish an advisory council to advise the minister on ambulance service matters. This advisory council will serve as a forum where ministry, municipal and other stakeholders can meet and discuss any issues related to land ambulance. This council would also provide advice to the minister to ensure that the continued high quality of service to the public is upheld. The public both expects and deserves this.

Let me say today that our experience with the Land Ambulance Task Force has proven this government's commitment to listening. I am intensely proud of the work that the task force has been able to produce and, as a testament to our willingness to listen in the first place, it allows me to stand up and explain these legislative changes to you today.

1620

The third amendment contained in this bill will broaden the existing prohibition against the charging of fees and copayments. Let me reiterate for the members that the government of Ontario announced in March its commitment to share land ambulance costs with municipalities. As well, the government also introduced legislation extending the deadline for the final transfer of responsibility to our municipal partners.

I'm proud to serve as the co-chair of the land ambulance implementation steering committee. I'm pleased to serve in that capacity along with two other co-chairs: one of them my colleague in the House, Brian Coburn, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; and also the municipal representative, Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region.

The steering committee's task is to ensure a smooth transition to municipal jurisdiction. There are several people who also sit on that committee, and I just want to name a few of them here today for the record. In addition to Roger Anderson and Brian Coburn, whom I mentioned, there is Jim Green, who is the commissioner of planning and economic development for the district municipality of Muskoka; there is Dan Ciona, the chief administrative officer for the county of Brant; there is John Cunnane, the director of the public safety division of the public health department of the region of Niagara; there is Joseph Moore, the general manager of ambulance and emergency programs for the region of Peel; and there's Marvin Caplan, a regional councillor with the city

of Hamilton. These are some of the people who serve on this committee.

As municipalities assume responsibility for providing land ambulance service, it is essential that this vital part of Ontario's health system remain universally accessible to all. As we all know, the Ambulance Act prohibits charging a fee or copayment in connection with transporting a person by ambulance unless that fee is permitted under the Ambulance Act or the Health Insurance Act. Under the legislation being debated today, fees and copayments will not be allowed even when that person isn't being moved in an ambulance. This will prevent any municipality or delivery agent from independently instituting user fees that may limit or prevent universal access to ambulance service.

I'm pleased and honoured to speak to the House today regarding this very important bill, the Red Tape Reduction Act, Bill 11. The purpose of the ambulance sections contained in this bill is to ensure that the people of Ontario have access to this very essential service. It will ensure public health and safety and the financial and economic well-being of the province and the municipalities. I'm pleased to support this bill, and I would urge every member of this House to do the same.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm certainly glad to join in this discussion regarding the Red Tape Reduction Act. I think the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member for Durham have certainly elucidated in some detail the significant benefits that are coming out of these red tape reduction bills, whether it be Bill 11 or some of the previous bills this government presented. I think it's most important to remind us that "red tape" sounds rather abstract. What difference does it make whether it takes a small business person or a professional or anybody who is attempting to access an apprenticeship training program, what does it matter whether it's a number of months, days, weeks, years? That used to be the attitude of previous regimes in Ontario. They were oriented and had a love for what you'd call "process."

Interjections.

Mr Hastings: Results? No, not too important. As the member for Scarborough Southwest has reiterated and the member for Victoria-Brock-Durham has reminded us, think of some of the examples of how the idea, the abstraction of red tape translates into practical benefits for small business people.

If you take the hospitality industry, in my riding of Etobicoke North this particular removal of the requirement from the Liquor Control Board of Ontario that you couldn't purchase any type of alcoholic beverage without the actual cheque or money order. Can you imagine? In an Internet age, in an age in which we are interconnected in the sense of telecommunications, in the sense of the whole computer industry, until the last year and a half, if you were a hotelier, if you were a restaurateur, you couldn't go and buy stuff that you required for your industry. You couldn't use a credit card. You couldn't buy alcohol or booze—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Booze, booze. Just say the words.

Mr Hastings: Are you satisfied, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence?

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: Tell it like it is, because I know the member across the way wouldn't give a hoot whether we'd stayed like that for the next century.

The significant benefit here is that when an operator like that, a small business person—

Interjection.

Mr Hastings: I know the member for St Catharines finds it totally irrelevant, because he's never had to operate a business. He doesn't understand at all the precious capital it takes to get a small business going.

What is the advantage of that? When you can use a credit card for buying equipment or, in this case, alcoholic consumption stuff, you can use that money for other things you need in your business for an extended period of time, because most businesses function this way.

It doesn't mean we're advocating that a business go into debt. It's simply a means of facilitating making business more effective. It also allows you, if you're a small business operator in the hospitality field, to hire perhaps one more person you need for your peak times in the hotel industry. I have a whole set of them out on the airport strip, and back in the last 10 years if you talked to the people from the hotel industry, the general managers, the people who worked in the industry, hotel-room utilization back then was down to under 50%, yet our commercial property taxes at that point in time were killing these companies. We're not just talking about hotels that are owned by chains; we're talking about the mom-and-pop operations, and there are lots of them around this city of Toronto, in the greater Toronto region and across southern and northern Ontario.

The removal of that requirement has facilitated and made things a lot easier for these people to operate in this particularly competitive field.

Another particular advantage of red tape reduction—I was involved with the Red Tape Commission. You look at the chemical industry, and I know the member for St Catharines has a quiet disdain, probably, for this industry, but if you look around you, practically anything you wear, the leather in this assembly, the books I see on the ministers' desks, probably has some kind of plastic involved in the containment of that particular item.

What the chemical producers were able to document in the last number of years is that it would take a huge amount of investment to get a new facility going. But guess what? The member for St Catharines' beloved environment ministry back in those days had a unique classification for the use of certain chemicals. I know that when he gets to speak on this we'll hear very strong denunciations of how irresponsible the chemical industry is and that I'm probably some kind of a fob for them. But when you really look at it, they employ a significant number of people. If you look at the number of chemical

facilities around this area, you have to have very astute, very knowledge-based individuals to deal with emergencies in the way they handle these particular, some of them hazardous, chemicals. There are some very strict requirements environmentally that they have to adhere to.

1630

The industry told us they're not afraid of obeying those particular restrictions. It's the ones in which you classify certain materials such as—the one I recall with great fascination is the inert material of an aggregate whose chemical name eludes me right now. It was classified under the James Bradley, member for St Catharines, environment ministry that you couldn't move any of this material from one place to another. I know he is a strong advocate of the contrast of what we said in this government, that is, to retain the red tape status quo. For example, I'm sure he wouldn't be in favour of the kiosk we set up for business registration in this province, because he prefers that you run around to every different spot getting your licence requirement. That's the way it should function.

I'll be interested to hear the member from St Catharines speak about this bill and how the federal government hasn't moved ahead in terms of reducing red tape. What they've done is institutionalized it and made it even slower to get things done.

The prime example involves a tremendously adverse impact in terms of newcomers to this great country. If you could see the sadness, the deep disappointment, almost what I would call betrayal by the federal government in the way in which the Ministry of Immigration handles newcomers to this country. It takes years and years to get an issue settled in terms of family settlement. It would be interesting to know if he would advocate the continuation of that kind of approach that's almost stupefyingly, maddeningly, leisurely, lackadaisically indifferent to the very people who want to bring their families and get them unified here in Ontario, so they can get on with creating a really good quality of life, so they can qualify for the jobs that are in this booming economy. They can't do it because of some of the misinformation that I have personally seen provided by immigration counsellors at embassies abroad.

Who was it who had to come up with accurate information as to the labour market in Ontario today? The provinces, not the federal government. They are telling people—I just had a gentleman in my office two Fridays ago who was told literally, "When you land in this country with an engineering degree, you will have a job within 60 days." They're still telling these people those kinds of inaccuracies. It's terribly misleading in the sense of being backdated.

It isn't the reality. You have to have the equivalencies today. When you look at the requirements from the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario, it takes quite a while. But here we have a federal government that's telling people: "You're going to be a doctor," "You're going to be a lawyer," "You're going to be a nurse," "You're going to be a technologist," automati-

cally, in no time. Well, that's not the reality at all. That's why they're ending up in some of the jobs they weren't trained for and why they aren't producing the income they require for their family.

That's why this provincial government has moved ahead with these red tape reduction bills which are so essential. It will be interesting to hear from the members opposite what their alternatives would be if the status quo is such a fulfilling entity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my pleasure to rise on Bill 11. I certainly want to give my appreciation to the staff in the minister's office and all the members who worked on putting together this bill. I know the intricate, complex work it involves. Even though we're on the other side of the House, we acknowledge the fact that this did take a lot of cooperation and work on the part of the government and the stakeholders. I certainly want to put that on the record before starting.

I would just like to make a number of comments about the bill. It is a very extensive bill because it changes so many acts. Therefore, it is quite intricate. There are a few errors I'd like to comment on, but I'm not going to comment on them all in my short time.

I don't want to get into talking about federal responsibilities. The problem in this House lately seems to be that many of the members on the opposite side keep on spending their time trying to prop up their Reform brothers in Ottawa. I guess they're not doing a good enough job of holding the Chrétien government to account, so they feel they have to pick up the slack here. I'd like to stick to provincial issues and the provincial mandate. There are very serious provincial mandates here that Bill 11 deals with.

The elimination and regulation of red tape is something we all applaud and we certainly require, because there's nothing more frustrating for private citizens or people in enterprises who have a great deal of difficulty making a living because of government bureaucracy and red tape. I know the member for Etobicoke North mentioned the item that people who own liquor establishments can now use credit cards. I think that's a good idea because today, who really does business in cash? I know in the past that's what the LCBO required.

The context too is very interesting. A lot of these old, antiquated regulations which this bill is trying to change and which some of the members criticized, were actually a by-product of orange Ontario, the old blue Ontario that ruled this province. When one of the members was speaking, it brought to mind the just-deceased mayor of Toronto, Allan Lamport, who had to battle all the powers that be when he was mayor to allow youngsters to play baseball on Sunday. The blue laws, we called them. Those were laws not put in by New Democrats or Liberals. Most of those laws which prohibited sports on Sundays—you couldn't even go to a movie on Sunday—were put in by Conservative governments. That was what

Ontario was like 30 or 40 years ago. So it's not something that we've put in; it's something that old or Conservative governments put in. It was a by-product of the traditions of Ontario.

The same with the liquor laws, which this updates in part, because of some of the purchasing requirements.

Those restrictions at the LCBO were put on, again, usually by Conservative governments, so when they stand up and criticize regulations and traditions, they're criticizing themselves. I just want to put that in that context, because certainly as Allan Lamport knew, Ontario is a changing province, a dynamic province that you had to change. Sometimes you have to make changes to make it more effective, more efficient and more representative of the people who live and work here. I hope the government respects that.

Some of the specific things that I wanted to raise here that this bill deals with are in the area of leasing. I know there are some changes and attempts by the minister to make some changes in leasing contracts. As you know, over 40% of all automobiles that people drive in this province are a result of a leasing contract. I think it's something that the government certainly is going in the right direction on, trying to make it more understandable, more accountable, more transparent in terms of what you're actually paying for when you lease the car. But I really don't think it's gone far enough, and I'll tell you where I really don't think it's gone far enough.

There still is too much interpretation of the leasing contract in terms of what residual values are of automobiles. What that really means is the wholesale price. You lease a car, you make your payments, and at the end you can either buy the car outright or you can continue to lease and there's a price flip. That's still very vague for the average consumer. Certainly some people are more attuned to values, but they really have no idea what these values are in a leasing contract.

The other thing in leasing contracts or the way leasing works in this province is that the whole advertising mechanism for leasing vehicles is very misleading. They're what I call the fine print ads and I think they should be outlawed. Basically you'll see a thing that says, "You can lease a new Cadillac for \$299 a month," but then when you read the fine print, the \$299 a month ends up being about \$600 a month because they forget to tell you that there is a \$10,000 down payment—they do tell you, but in very small print, that the \$299 does not include the down payment, the GST, the PST, all the other added-on charges. By the time you get out of that deal, you pick up the car that in the newspaper ad said was \$299, you're all of a sudden stuck with twice that.

1640

That's why I think fine-print leasing ads, which are in every newspaper in every city in this province, should be eliminated. Give us the whole price. If that out-the-door price is \$699, put the \$699 in there. Don't mislead people by saying, "This is the price." It is nowhere near the price, in most cases. That's one of the inclusions that could have been in this bill when they dealt with leasing.

Also, in terms of door-to-door sales: Door-to-door sales are still very problematic. I had a case in my riding this past year where an elderly woman who wanted some repairs done to her home ended up paying over \$125,000 for minor repairs. That has basically depleted her whole bank account. It wasn't until after the fact that she went to the police and the police apprehended the two individuals.

The problem was that these two individuals, who said they were bona fide renovators, had no licences and had no need to give any resumé. As you know, seniors are sometimes caught up in the hype of door-to-door sales, and this poor woman was. She ended up basically out of pocket for \$125,000 and all they did was repair a back shed.

Door-to-door sales and taking advantage of vulnerable people is still taking place. I would hope we would have more restrictions on people who go door to door to offer not only products, but things like renovations. There is a lot of room and I think there should be more awareness. Maybe the minister can put out more information in terms of "Buyer beware." If that person is going to offer repairs to your home or your apartment, you should check references and you shouldn't sign any contract or you shouldn't have any work done until you see the completed contract and have someone verify that the contract is a valid one. A lot of seniors have no one to help them. They're on their own and they're being taken as we speak.

The other thing that's happening in consumer affairs—and I've written to the minister about this; I know he made mention of this part of direct sales—is the telephone sales that are taking place. We know that in almost every province, including Ontario, there are companies that are misleading people by telephone promotions.

First of all they mail these scratch and win cards. I don't know if you got one at your door, but thousands of these are mailed out. It says, "If you scratch this and win, phone this 1-900 number and find out what your prize is." When you do it, what happens in every case—in fact, I'm going to scratch this right now. It says, "Win up to \$5,000." I bet there is a king and four aces here. Let me bet. OK, I'm scratching it: a king and four aces. All these cards make you a winner. Then what happens? The trick is, they then ask you to phone the 1-900 number. They don't tell you that while you're on the phone it's \$3.99 a minute. There's a recording at the other end; by the time the recording is completed and they tell you that you'll win basically a bag of jelly beans, six minutes have gone by. So you've essentially been duped out of \$24 because you thought you were a winner when this came to your door.

This is happening all over the province. This is one type that is taking place. I know that Project Phonebusters—I've talked to them—at the OPP are trying to do their best. This type of telephone, door-to-door type of sales is duping all kinds of unsuspecting Ontarians. I've written to the minister asking him to outlaw this type of thing, because it's misleading. This company was oper-

ating out of Kitchener, right here in Ontario. We couldn't get hold of anybody. They wouldn't answer the phone. I've brought it to the OPP's attention. You can imagine how much money you could make by sending out hundreds of thousands of these; at \$24 a shot every time someone phones, the money that is made on these misleading things. I'm just warning everybody out there, if you get any scratch cards in the mail, do not phone, because you'll pay for that phone call. It could cost you a lot more than that prize.

This type of thing should be outlawed by the minister, and I hope he can work and produce an amendment to his legislation that will outlaw this type of solicitation on the phone.

I'm glad of the cooling-off period. I think that's a good part of this legislation. It's been increased to 10 days. It was two days. Someone comes door to door; they're selling you a vacuum cleaner; they're in there and they're vacuuming that carpet like you've never seen before; they're having coffee with you; they're schmoozing you. In many cases, it's unsuspecting seniors again and they end up buying a vacuum cleaner. Then when their husband or their partner comes home, the partner goes, "Well, why did you pay \$600 for this vacuum cleaner?"

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Six hundred? Twelve hundred.

Mr Colle: The member from Welland-Thorold says some people pay up to \$1,200 for these vacuum cleaners and you can get the same vacuum cleaner, or a better one, down on the corner at the local hardware store for \$200. The only trouble is, the purchaser is too embarrassed sometimes to admit they've been duped by this door-to-door salesperson. So I like the idea of the 10-day cooling-off period. It gives them time.

I think, though, that these aggressive, door-to-door sales are still taking place. I've got complaints from the small town of Wardsville, near London in Lambton county, where they were saying they had a super-aggressive salesman going to every door in Wardsville with this vacuum cleaner again and preying on people in that rural community. Literally, he wouldn't leave the house until they signed the contract. To get rid of the person, they were almost signing this contract for this huge amount to get this vacuum cleaner.

I hope the minister will continue to monitor those complaints, and I would hope that this type of aggressive door-to-door sales of products is monitored. It's not something we should outlaw, but we should outlaw the bad door-to-door sales techniques that basically take advantage of people who can't afford to pay \$1,200, as they're paying in Welland-Thorold, for vacuum cleaners door to door. At least in this bill there is a move towards giving people more time to have second thoughts, the 10-day cooling-off period.

There is a very important section about ambulances. As you know, the ambulance services have been downloaded to the upper tier, regional government for the most part, county government, so they're going to have a

huge responsibility on their shoulders. A lot of the details in the legislation on ambulances and the regulation of ambulances at the municipal level is now basically the jurisdiction of the municipalities. I just ask people out there to monitor it, because now you don't have province-wide jurisdiction. Therefore, we've got to be very careful that we don't have an ad hoc approach in terms of the level of service or the quality of service that you get in your ambulance and critical, obviously life-and-death, services. They're so important.

I would hope that the minister, again, ensures that the province, in this transition of responsibility to municipalities, will be ready to step in if some of these services are not delivered properly to the people of Ontario, because now you just can't rely totally on the province for ambulance services; you have to rely on your local municipality.

1650

This is one of many critical parts of a bill which a lot of people say is just a regulation bill and so forth. There are so many parts of this legislation that affect not only businesses but ordinary people right across Ontario.

The minister has had stakeholder meetings etc, but I would hope that the public is aware that in these 220-odd pages of the bill there is something for everybody. Hopefully most of them are improvements, but it's something that should be monitored because, as government makes changes, we are all affected by them downstream, no doubt about it.

The only concern I have about the ambulance section is in terms of the concept of downloading that service, which is a health service. Certainly in our party we don't feel that health services should be at the local level, because the property taxpayer has enough to worry about—garbage and road repair and other essential lower-level services. We think in the long run that's going to be an open door to privatization, which we don't think is good either.

I would like to mention that we've heard talk about helping business do their business, and this is one of the objectives of this bill. Perhaps one of the pieces of advice I'll give the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations is that I wish he would take a look at the red tape in the eight property tax bills that this government has passed. Those eight bills are the most complex property tax bills in the civilized world. I've been told there are only two people in Ontario who understand our property taxes at this time. Peter Tomlinson is one of them and the other one, I'm told, is Ernie Eves, and I'm not sure about Ernie.

Those eight property tax bills—as you know, another one has just been introduced, another amendment—are going to be even more complex because there are these caps on the commercial. In Toronto we have 2.5% and outside of Toronto there are different caps: 5% and up.

Are these caps going to come off or not? A real estate agent phoned my office the other day and said: "I lost a \$2-million sale because, when the prospective purchaser saw what the taxes would be on the property when the

caps come off in another year"—I can't remember the exact figure—"he saw that the taxes were unaffordable. He then walked away from the sale."

There is uncertainty there in property taxation. The business occupancy tax has been taken off. Landlords are now responsible for it. All over Ontario there's conflict between landlords and small business people who are renting space from landlords on who should pay what for rent, who should be paying for the property tax, who should be paying for the old business occupancy tax that is now folded into the property tax.

I challenge the Red Tape Commission, if they really want to help small business in this province, to look at that property tax mess. It is not understandable. You have to hire a team of Bay Street lawyers or the best lawyers in Listowel to figure out even one of those eight tax bills. I hope that the minister will direct his staff and maybe direct the Red Tape Commission to look at property taxation in this province. If there's anything that is costing small business money, sleepless nights—in fact, as we speak, 300 municipalities in this province have not gotten their final 1999 bill for taxes. Usually they get that in June or July. Three hundred have not gotten their 1999 bill and some of them have not even got their 1998 tax bill on the commercial side because of the changes.

It's so complex, even the greatest computer geek in the world cannot figure out how the software works for property taxation, how the system works. It is unbelievably complex. Talk about red tape. Go look at it in your property tax legislation. I hope that the Red Tape Commission and the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations sit down with Minister Eves and try to explain those eight pieces of legislation—I hear there's another one coming; it's going to be nine pieces of legislation on property taxation. On top of that, we're going to have another reassessment coming up for the year 2000, based on, I guess, the year 1999. So that's going to add even more complexity to the caps and the phase-ins. We're going to have phase-ins on top of caps on top of phase-ins. You're going to have to hire—I don't know who; maybe in Listowel you have people who can figure it out, but certainly not in the greater Toronto area. This property tax mess is really something that I hope the Red Tape Commission looks at and tries to explain to ordinary Ontarians, who essentially can't keep up with these Bay Street lawyers—even the Bay Street lawyers have been trying to find out who could explain the property tax bills to them.

In closing, before my good friend from St Catharines stands up—I know there was a reference to past ministries of the environment doing too much. A past Minister of the Environment, the Honourable Jim Bradley, as he was at the time, at least was there protecting the Niagara Escarpment. He was there protecting clean water. We've got an attitude now in this government that is basically do nothing, look the other way, pretend that water is not being impacted by all this unbridled development, pretend that the leak that's happening in—there's a big landfill in Sarnia; all this contaminate is leaking out,

going into Lake Huron. They're not doing anything about it. I would rather have a Minister of the Environment like Jim Bradley, who stood up for clean water, who stood up for the Niagara Escarpment, who stood up for the long-term benefits of clean air, good water and good farmland.

Mr Speaker, I know you have a lot of agricultural property in your riding and people there appreciate the fact that they have to make a living and provide food for the rest of this province from good farmland. As we stand here, another 70,000 hectares of good farmland in the GTA, some of the best in the world, is about to be paved over and gotten rid of because we have a government that's not willing to stand up and protect this very vulnerable agricultural land in the GTA here.

I'd rather have, as I said, a government that's at least proactive in protecting the public interests in terms of good farmland, good water and good sustainable development.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'll be sharing the time that's been allocated to us with my colleague Mr Kormos and my colleague Mr Martin. I will make a few brief comments and then they will carry the rest of this debate.

I'm pleased to join in the debate this afternoon with respect to Bill 11. I want to begin by saying that the greatest irony of this so-called red tape reduction bill is that it itself is really a classic case of government red tape. I ask the people who are watching out there to think about the fact that this bill is some 225 pages, not one that you're going to easily pull off the Internet. I suspect that if you went to the government bookstore and paid for this, you would pay a pretty penny for the ability to review what the government wants to do.

I heard the members talk about how, "We want to cut through red tape," and, "This is getting rid of the status quo," and, "The public will be happy with this," and on and on and on. I say to the government members, if you were serious about hearing from the public about the initiatives, about where red tape is going to be cut, you certainly wouldn't come forward with a bill that's this lengthy, that will have a significant cost to those who want to purchase it at the bookstore because they don't have access to the Internet. Clearly you're not really interested in hearing what the people have to say or making it available to them in a form and a manner in which they can review what the government is doing.

What's even more interesting than the costs that might be incurred if you tried to pick this up at the government bookstore because you don't have the Internet is that if the bill is so effective as a red tape bill—the government itself doesn't even know what's in this bill.

I point out to people who have a chance to access the Internet that if you go to the Internet, the government has a Web site which informs us about Bill 11. There's information on the Internet about the bill. The backgrounder that appears on the Internet with respect to the bill says, "The Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999, if passed, will repeal the Oleomargarine Act, the Abandoned Orchards Act, the Fur Farm Act and the Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act."

1700

The truth is that none of these acts appear in Bill 11. They can't be found in the explanatory notes, in the various schedules that make up the bill, in any of the details in any of the schedules. As a point of fact, at least four of those bills that appear on the government Web site as part of Bill 11 aren't a part of the bill at all. Isn't that effective cutting of red tape?

What's even more interesting is that the Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act that is referred to on the Web site was in fact already repealed by the Conservative government in December 1998. We all know how the government likes to announce and reannounce, and reannounce, its various initiatives, but this is just a little bit more than silly for the government to have on its own Web site, in the bill that's supposed to focus on red tape reduction, the appearance of an act that the government has already repealed. If the government itself can't figure out what's in the bill, has a Web site that people can have access to that has major flaws in it—major mistakes, omissions, however you want to describe it—does the government really think that they can have Ontarians figure out what's involved here and make sound judgments on what's involved?

It really is a classic case of red tape when you've got a bill this size that won't be easily accessible to the public. On the government Web site they give false, improper, incorrect information about what's included. How can you really expect the people to make up their minds, to have a judgment? Aren't we seeing that the government really didn't want people to have their say, really didn't want to know what was happening, and that's why the bill comes in the form it does?

I want to focus on two of the schedules in particular and a red tape item that is missing that I would have thought the government would have had in here since it relates directly to its Red Tape Commission. The first is schedule N, which relates to the section on natural resources, particularly the section regarding the Niagara Escarpment. Subsection 17(1) of the bill says, "At least once every 10 years, the minister shall establish terms of reference for a review of the Niagara Escarpment plan and shall cause the review to be undertaken." The change in that section has to do with a change in the time period for the review, because under the current act a review of the Niagara Escarpment plan has to be undertaken every five years. Our government undertook its review of the Niagara Escarpment plan, as per legislation. I suspect that we are seeing a change in the time period in this bill right now, because this government is probably overdue in terms of complying with the Niagara Escarpment act to have a review. So with this change the government gets to put off reviewing that very important plan.

I don't know why the government wants to do that. I cannot understand that kind of change. We should, as a province, be exceptionally proud that the escarpment is a designated UNESCO site. We should be privileged and remember that we are privileged, that UNESCO has designated the escarpment as a world heritage site. It

becomes even more incumbent then on the provincial government, which has the plan and which has the act, to ensure that development issues that continue to crop up all of the time on an ongoing basis and how they may or may not impact on the escarpment are reviewed, that the plan is in effect, that it's in good force, that it's taking into account changes that may have to be made. Maybe it's taking into account things that should be changed because they're not good for the purposes of the escarpment and protection of the escarpment and protection of the designation as a UNESCO site.

I can't understand what the government gains by saying essentially that a review will now not take place on their plan except for once every 10 years. I think the issues that surround the escarpment are much more important than that. I think the government should continue to have an important monitoring role with respect to the escarpment. One of the ways they do that is through the terms of reference for the review, which up until this point would have happened every year.

I hope we don't see these kinds of continuing changes with respect to the environment, where the government, through red tape bills, through cutbacks in enforcement, through cutbacks in its ministry staff, ends up really whittling away the protection that is so important not only for the escarpment but for clean air, clean water and other things that Ontarians care very deeply about.

The second schedule I want to touch on briefly is schedule B. These refer to a number of changes that the Attorney General is making under various acts. Specifically I would refer to the changes to the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, 1996. The changes that occur from section 8 on have to do with ensuring that a payor who is in arrears will have his or her name filed with the Ontario Lottery Corp so that if a prize with a value of over \$1,000 is obtained by that payor, any arrears that are owing will be deducted from that lottery winning, or if the arrears are greater than the prize, all of the prize will be taken, will be sent to the director of the Family Responsibility Office and paid out to the recipient who is owed that money, and there will be nothing left for the payor who has won the prize.

I want to point out that it has taken a full three years for the government to get its act together to put this change into legislation. In the fall of 1996, the former Attorney General talked about ensuring that arrears were deducted from lottery winnings and that those winnings were then sent to the recipient who was owed that money. It has taken the government three years to do this one single small enforcement item, to put it into place in legislation. Why is it that something the government dealt with in a bill, Bill 82, over three years ago is only now finally making its way into law? That's pathetic.

What's more pathetic is for the government to focus on this small item with respect to enforcement, something that should have been done three years ago, at the expense of the numerous other enforcement activities that the FRO should be undertaking and is not.

The auditor was very clear in the comments he made several weeks ago in his report with respect to the complete lack of enforcement activities occurring at the Family Responsibility Office right now. The auditor made it very clear that enforcement actions at the FRO only take place as a result of complaints being made by recipients, or by people acting on their behalf, who demand that enforcement activity be undertaken. There is nothing proactive about enforcement at the FRO. Enforcement activities are undertaken when recipients get on the phone, stay on the phone for hour after hour, finally talk to a live body and demand that some action be taken on arrears.

The auditor was even more specific. He said that on many cases, when enforcement action was finally taken—after the recipient called in and demanded action be taken or his or her advocate called in and demanded action be taken—there were often gaps of more than six months before there was any activity on a file. I suspect the only reason there was another set of activities after six months is because the recipient or his or her advocate called again and asked the FRO what they were doing.

What was even more compelling was that the auditor said more aggressive enforcement alternatives such as driver's licence or passport suspensions, bank account garnishments or a default hearing are seldom pursued. That is probably why, under this Conservative government, the amount of arrears owing has almost doubled on their watch. Despite all the foofaraw three years ago when the then Attorney General brought in Bill 82, the fact of the matter is that three years later arrears have almost doubled at the FRO under this Conservative government. The auditor also pointed out that in 75% of all cases on file at the FRO, arrears were owing. Surely, if the minister cared at all, primarily about women and kids, because they are usually the recipients, he would do something about this very serious situation at the FRO, where it is clear that his staff is doing nothing about enforcement, nothing about ensuring that women and children get the payments they are owed.

1710

We've got a bill here today that puts in effect something that should have been passed three years ago, that the government promised to pass three years ago. We have a horrendous situation now that the auditor has just recently reported on, which clearly shows that all of the other enforcement activities that were also passed are not working.

Now the government is going to go ahead and use private sector collection agencies to try and collect arrears, after we have already been shown, by the pilot project that just ended in October, that the use of private collection agencies to collect arrears was a total bust. The private collection agencies collected a little over 1% of the \$450 million that was owing to women and children. So the government's response is totally inadequate, both with respect to what appears in Bill 11, with respect to their comments back to the auditor which appear in the auditor's report, and with respect to the most recent

actions of the minister to say that they are now going to shift even more files over to the private collection agency, which will just absolutely guarantee that women and children will never, ever see the money they are entitled to.

The other thing the auditor pointed out with respect to red tape—and it's curious that it doesn't appear anywhere in this bill, or it's not referred to—had to do with the review that he undertook of the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau. He focused on it in this context: He looked at the bureau because it is responsible for transferring millions and millions of dollars every year to transfer payment agencies, specifically those that provide drug and alcohol treatment programs to Ontarians right across the province, in all of these communities across the province.

What was interesting is that in the auditor's review, when he was looking at accountability, he made it very clear that in this particular case there was no accountability between the bureau itself and the many transfer payment agencies they provided funds to. It was interesting where he lay the blame for this. He said very clearly that through the accountability framework between the bureau and its transfer payment agencies, there should be an agreement with the transfer payment agencies about how funds would flow.

"The agreement should ensure that there is an understanding of the objectives and results to be achieved and the responsibilities for reporting performance. The bureau's draft operating manual, prepared during the 1996-97 fiscal year, requires service agreements with all treatment agencies outlining the ministry's expectations for each agency. A draft service agreement was developed in late 1996 but it could not be finalized until approved by the provincially appointed Red Tape Commission. The bureau submitted the agreement to the Red Tape Commission in early 1997. At the time of our audit," which was during 1998, "the bureau was still waiting for a response from the commission. Accordingly, no agreements were in place."

As far as we know from the auditor, those agreements are still not in place, because the Red Tape Commission, three years later, still has not provided a response to the work that the bureau did; three years later, a serious situation with respect to transfer payments being made from the substance abuse bureau to those many organizations that are providing services. The Red Tape Commission was given full authority to deal with service agreements, to change them if they wanted to, to make amendments and to finalize them, and three years later, they still haven't done that.

When we talk about red tape today and some of the actions of the Red Tape Commission, it's interesting that none of that was mentioned here, even though the auditor has very clearly outlined that in his most recent report to this assembly.

I will conclude by saying that if the government really wanted to have people have a good, serious look at what they were doing this afternoon, it would never have put forward a bill of 225 pages, with information about it on

the Internet which is incorrect. It's clear to me that the government is not terribly interested in hearing what people have to say and in finding out whether or not they really think reduction in red tape is going to be achieved from these initiatives. What's really disheartening is that some of the most important areas that should have been addressed, like what are we doing at the Family Responsibility Office when it comes to enforcement, are totally missing from this. Instead, we have part of a legislation that should have been passed three years ago that the government is finally coming forward with to make up its commitment to the people that it made at that time, three years ago.

I say it's a shame that this isn't in a format and at a price available to people that they might clearly be able to see what the government is all about. I suspect the reason for that was that the government really didn't want them to have a clear idea of what was happening under this bill.

Mr Bradley: The red tape bills are always dangerous because contained in them is always something that is extremely detrimental to the province and they hide it in one of these huge bills called a "red tape bill."

I should say that one of my great concerns about this government and the way in which it is proceeding, and I suspect this may be the case with governments in other jurisdictions, is that they, more and more, are coming forward with omnibus bills. I call them "ominous" bills more than omnibus, because they contain a number of items, and you would like to perhaps agree with some of the items in those bills and disagree with other of the items in the bills.

Not everything, I find, in legislation this government passes is not supportable. There are some things that are supportable in bills, and I like to be able to vote for them, but I can't vote for them because there's always a hostage somewhere in the bill that makes me vote against it. That's why private member's hour is usually pretty good, because not too many hostages are around. I even voted for a resolution from the member for Scarborough—used to be Scarborough-Ellesmere; it's Scarborough South-west now—Mr Newman, because it was a pretty good bill on that occasion. But I digress. I don't like getting away from the actual topic of a bill. I like to stay on topic.

I'm very concerned, first of all, when I see the downloading of ambulance services. This opens the door even wider, quite obviously, for an American-style health care system. You will have Rural/Metro, which charges a huge amount of money in the US, not just for the transportation but for the services provided in the ambulance. They're just lining up at the border. My friend from Niagara Centre will tell you, there's a lineup right at the border. It's clogging the border now with the American ambulance companies waiting to move into Ontario like vultures, ready to take over and gouge the people of this province.

What have you done? You've dumped it on local municipalities. They have a hard time coping because of

all the responsibilities that you have placed upon them and the additional financial burden.

One piece of red tape that you can get rid of would involve property assessment. It has been a mess. My friend from Scarborough-Agincourt tells me this is the seventh or eighth or ninth bill that deals with property taxes and the change in assessment. I know the Downtown Association in our area was very concerned because they, first of all, got a substantial reduction, and then the government came along and said: "Well, we can't give you that. We're going to implement a 10-5-5 rule." This is Mike Harris bringing this rule in, his government. Who do they blame? Of course, Frank Sheehan is there. Frank is pointing at the local government, saying, "We have too many politicians." I love hearing that: too many politicians. What you have to have, of course, is a sufficient number to be able to reflect the views of the people.

Another piece of red tape that people want to get rid of is that there's a great push on by the forces of the right wing in the Niagara Peninsula to have one huge Niagara region. My friend from Burlington-Halton-Wentworth—it used to be Wentworth North. The member formerly of Wentworth-North and I know the problems this can cause. We both want to see local communities thrive and continue on. There's no need to put the boots to the smaller municipalities and to force huge regions on people. Of course, it's now almost a self-fulfilling—

Hon Mr Stockwell: Prophecy.

Mr Bradley: Prophecy. I like the word the member uses. That's what it is.

What you've got is a ludicrous situation where some local politicians are saying, "Well, Mike Harris is going to force this on us, so we'd better do it before he forces us." Why would you do that? Why would you say, "We better amputate ourselves at the knee because if we don't, Mike Harris is going to amputate us at the hip"? I'm saying you don't need an amputation.

1720

Now, the Conrad Black newspapers across this province are all for it, because then they can have just one newspaper, wipe out all the small newspapers and have one big newspaper, one big everything. To me it doesn't make sense. I hope that when the Minister of Labour becomes the Minister of Municipal Affairs, he will understand the kind of arguments my friend Mr Skarica and I are putting forward in matters of this kind. I'm sure Mr Maves as well would want to protect Niagara-on-the-Lake from the Niagara region gobbling it up. He won election, and I think the difference was in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Those people will be holding him accountable on that, and he will be very sympathetic. I know him to be sympathetic to local government and local accountability.

Speaking of red tape, sometimes if you put your political sniffer up you find out what the government is up to. I'll tell you what they're up to now. They want to bring in four bills in one for restructuring. My prediction is that the Minister of Municipal Affairs will get up and have four bills in one. So the former member from

Wentworth North and I will have a hard time focusing on areas, because there's a different solution for each area. What's good for Ottawa, for Hamilton, for Haldimand or for Sudbury may be different in each of those cases, and yet I predict we're going to see one bill. I'll be fighting it, of course, and we have a progressive-minded Speaker who I'm sure will find my arguments extremely compelling and will likely accept my arguments, particularly when I say it's our turn to win one. As the last Speaker said, that was the most compelling argument I made on one occasion about a particular matter of procedure.

I heard the member for Etobicoke North, who interjects or grunts—whatever it is—several times at me from the other side. He was complaining about the chemical producers not liking my regime as the Minister of the Environment. I can tell you that polluters love this government. If there's one promise you have kept—and I'm a fair-minded person; I don't say you have broken all your promises. The one promise you kept was to get the Ministry of the Environment out of the face of polluters. You did that, and I'll say it. I'm fair-minded, and I'm prepared to concede that's exactly what happened. They said: "We don't like the Ministry of the Environment. We're going to get rid of it. Don't worry about that. We will tell them to be business friendly." As a result, they virtually abandoned environmental requirements on the other side and have reduced it. This is the red tape bill, which talks about that. I'm going to get to another area.

Let me first say what I don't find in the bill. I don't find any red tape for opening up new gambling opportunities in this province. I know those of you who are part of the family values crowd on the other side, who leave church as virtuous as ever and tell everyone, "Yes, our government is a virtuous government in tune with you." I know you have spoken to the Premier and said, "Please, don't bring in by the back door the new Mike Harris gambling halls," that is, don't allow them to put thousands upon thousands of slot machines in the racetracks and then say they're still racetracks. What you have converted them into are mini-casinos. This province is wide open now. When I hear some of the family values crowd out there, I say, "Where were you when Norm Sterling was allowing beer on the golf course or opening liquor stores on Sunday or allowing people to stay open till 2 o'clock in the morning?" That may or may not be a good thing, but I have not heard anything about that from the family values crowd, and I was waiting to hear from them.

Anyway, this bill affects the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act. Now the escarpment plan review is only to be done every 10 years, not every five years. It should be done every five years.

A new maximum 60-day limit for commenting on the plan. I can hear the developers applauding for that one. They'll be scrambling to get their tickets to the next Tory fundraiser for that change alone, a limit of only 60 days for commenting on plan amendments.

Hearing officers must now report on issues that require an amendment to the escarpment plan in 60 days,

not 90 days. Instead of taking the proper time—remembering, as the Minister of Labour would know, that they've shrunk the staff there, that the commenting staff around ministries has gone way down in complement—they're now going to force them to come up with lousy decisions in a short period of time.

Mr Tilson and I are always worried about that, as is Mr Sterling, the former Minister of the Environment. You will recall, Mr Speaker—and you were probably as sad as I was—when they took the control of the Niagara Escarpment Commission away from the then Minister of the Environment, Norm Sterling—the one person in the cabinet who cared about the Niagara Escarpment—and gave it to another ministry. I know how concerned you are about that.

The minister or hearing officer can now dismiss appeals of development permits if they determine that they are frivolous or made for the purpose of delay. I wouldn't trust some ministers or some hearing officers with that particular power. Hearing officers must now report on development permit issues in 30 days.

Once again, we see a reducing of the Niagara Escarpment Commission as a significant protector of the environment in this province. All of those people, even those who are Conservatives out there, and there are many, who are concerned about the escarpment and its future, should know that snuck inside this bill, hidden inside the pages of this bill, is a provision which would enable this government to make it easier for development to take place on the Niagara Escarpment.

I want to save sufficient time for my good friend from Agincourt, so I'll now pass my time over to—an NDPer I think is next; Mr Kormos probably.

Mr Kormos: I have but a few brief moments to speak to this. Mr Martin, who's our critic in these matters, will be addressing it.

This, again, is an omnibus bill. Just take a quick run-through. Quite frankly, amongst other things, it's a "clean up the mess" bill: schedule B, subsection 2(1), rewritten to correct an error; subsection 4(1), an amendment to correct an error; subsection 4(2), an amendment to correct an error; section 5, an unproclaimed provision—unproclaimed—it never became law, is repealed; section 6, to correct an error; section 10—again, of schedule B—amended to correct an error; section 12, to correct an error; section 13, amended to correct an error; section 15, amended to correct an error; section 19, amended to correct an error; schedule E, section 1, corrects errors in the French version of three provisions of the Child and Family Services Act etc.

Having said that, in every one of these omnibus, so-called, misnamed, oxymoronic red tape bills, inevitably there is more and more delegation of what should be legislative authority to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, regulation which never sees the light of day in public debate—and it should.

You heard me talk earlier today to the Solicitor General about how his government is prepared to make exemptions for drunk drivers whose licences are suspended

and whose cars ought to be impounded if you get caught driving. The Lieutenant Governor in Council, as a result of this government's legislation, is going to be capable and will be prepared to make exemptions for certain suspended drivers. Merry Christmas to drunks.

Let me express the caution we should have about these omnibus bills. Back on June 25, 1996, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight omnibus bills, so-called red tape bills, were presented to this Legislature. The debate was but one evening. I can tell you the opposition parties voted against those bills—that many bills affecting literally hundreds of statutes, in many respects, oh so innocuously. But inevitably something has sneaked into here about which we and the public should be very concerned. It is only recently that I found out that this government, back in June 1996, when they rammed those one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight bills, all of them red tape bills the size of this, repealed War Veterans Burial Act. This government sneaks through this Legislature the repeal of the War Veterans Burial Act. The act was dated. It provided for compensation for indigent veterans of Her Majesty's military services during any war. It put a responsibility on municipalities to make a contribution. No, please.

1730

In my community, as in yours, we're losing these veterans on a daily basis. The passage of time is taking its toll. We have but a couple of hundred First World War veterans left in this whole country and our Second World War veterans are leaving us daily. Within a matter of literally a handful of years, we'll not have those with us any more either. And because of what has happened in this province, many of these are dying as indigents. The War Veterans Burial Act applied to any veteran of any war who died after the war—I've read it, my friend—and provided for a modest contribution by the municipality to their funeral costs.

The quantity of money, quite frankly, is modest, because the bill was dated. The bill didn't need repeal; it needed amendment. But this government, rather than doing the right thing, repealed it, and what little dignity a war veteran might have had by virtue of this legislation. Rather than correcting the bill and increasing—it's a modest amount; it dates back to the post-Second World War era. I'll be candid with you: The amount provided was \$15. That doesn't mean you repeal it. You amend it to reflect the real value of that person's life to his friends, his family, his community and his or her country.

This isn't an element of this bill. But I raise it because, after that rushed debate—the bill only went to committee of the whole House rather than to committee hearings where this could be exposed. But just as the repeal of the War Veterans Burial Act was contained in that bill, in this bill and in every other so-called red tape bill that has been presented by this government there has been an underhanded and insidious attack, government going through the back door where no government would dare go through the front door.

I apologize to the veterans of this province and this country for what this government did to them by virtue of their last set of red tape bills. I apologize, and I express deep regret at having been forced with my colleagues to participate in such an abbreviated debate and not having been able to bring the matter to the attention of the public during committee. The bill says, "In the event of the death of any person who was an indigent person and who was a member of Her Majesty's naval, military or air forces in active service during any war and the burial was ... paid for from the Last Post Fund, the municipality in which the person resided at the time of his or her death shall pay the expenses of such burial," and it includes a modest, a trivial, sum that reflects the reality of costs of the '40s and '50s. But you don't repeal it, you amend it. That's red tape? No, that's an insult to veterans.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On Bill 11, an act to reduce red tape, I'll begin by saying that it's important that governments have the tools to expeditiously update statutes, regulations and bills that have fallen out of currency. As a matter of fact, one of the first of these that I saw was the omnibus bill submitted by the NDP; I think it was about 1994. I was supportive of it. It was a bill where essentially the government of the day said to the opposition: "Listen, we're trying to bring forward several non-controversial issues to get the laws updated. We believe all of these amendments and changes are non-controversial so we'd like to pass this bill as an omnibus bill." I was supportive of that, and indeed that was a useful exercise.

You may recall that one of the very first pieces of legislation the new Harris government brought in was Bill 26, the omnibus bill. It became known as the bully bill. It was taking an idea and then abusing it. Fortunately there was a substantial demonstration here in the Legislature and that bill, rather than being rammed through, was forced into fairly substantial committee hearings. I hope the government learned a lesson from that exercise.

I'm concerned now that the government is moving back into its old ways. I have no difficulty in dealing with legitimate omnibus bills that update statutes. But now, in my opinion, the government has decided to use that technique to pass bills and to achieve things that really should be out for some public debate.

I'll take several examples in the bill. The first example is that this bill combines the Ontario Casino Corp and the Ontario Lottery Corp, puts them together. In the bill—I haven't added up the pages—there are probably 30 pages dealing with that specific issue.

Let me just say to all of us, in my opinion, gambling today is not a huge, high, public profile issue. I personally predict it will become one. The government has introduced 10,000 slot machines. I was in London, Ontario, the other day and the headline in the local paper was that the money is absolutely pouring in. People are lined up to play the slot machines. It is a bonanza. There is twice as much money being taken out of the Ontario economy this year on slot machines as the tax cut theoretically put into it. If the government believes that the

tax cut is helping to create economic activity, the slot machines are taking out twice as much as the tax cut is putting in.

This bill is 225 pages. It's buried in here. It is taking the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp and ramming them together. I've got some severe reservations, by the way, about the Ontario Casino Corp owning casinos. I personally think it's only a matter of time until there is some casino—as in the US where there are casinos that have fallen on hard times. It will happen around North America. Yet we're going to pass this bill, almost without debate on that aspect of the bill. I think that one deserves far more attention than we're providing today. As I say, today the issue of gambling seems to be on the back burner, but the government, I gather, is planning another 10,000 slot machines. It will take another huge chunk out of the economy.

As I said earlier, I have no difficulty with omnibus bills that deal with real red tape and with expediting a change in the government. I want to talk about two or three other aspects within the bill. They've been touched on briefly by some of my colleagues.

1740

Another significant aspect of this kind of "red tape" bill has very little to do with red tape and eliminating red tape. It implements the downloading of ambulance services from provincial responsibility, by and large, to municipal responsibility. We're going to deal with that with the stroke of a pen.

I remind us that the Who Does What panel, the group of 14 people hand-picked by Premier Harris, respected people drawn from around the province. They came together and Premier Harris said to them, "You tell the government what things should be handled municipally and what things should be handled provincially."

That panel said to the Premier, "We are strongly opposed to moving ambulance services to the municipalities." In fact, they were unanimous. They used the word "unanimous." Why? If we think about it here, does it make any sense that the quality of your health care depends on the size of your local property assessment base? It doesn't. To use the language, we all want equality of health opportunities regardless of where we live. But this bill further implements or helps to implement the downloading of ambulances on to property taxes, and that's not right.

The third thing I want to talk about in the very limited time we have—as I say, I would urge the public to at least be aware of the fact that there are 225 pages of, in many respects, very substantial changes—is that we heard a week ago from the Provincial Auditor, who expressed real worries about something called the Family Responsibility Office. That office is supposed to help mainly women to get from their spouses money that the spouses should be, but are not, paying them.

We heard that the arrears had gone up from about \$700 million to \$1.2 billion. One of the NDP members talked about a 40% or 50% increase in the arrears. We have the opportunity today to deal with that, but all we

have in here and the only thing the government has moved on is to go after lottery winnings. We pay the auditor \$7.5 million of taxpayers' money. The auditor has given his recommendations that we should have in this bill, but we're dealing with only giving the government the authority to go after lottery winnings of dead-beat dads. We should be dealing with several other recommendations the Provincial Auditor has made to us.

I just say to all of us, I guess governments of any political stripe love to find ways that minimize the debate. I think that's unfortunate. This bill minimizes the debate we should be having on some extremely important issues and it's all masked under something called red tape. I have no difficulty with cutting out red tape, but much of this is not about red tape, it's about fundamental programs we should be debating.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have to agree that the member for Scarborough-Agincourt is absolutely right when he says we should be debating stuff of more fundamental value to the people of the province.

Here I am, in a matter of four to five years, up for a third time as the critic for consumer and commercial relations, debating a red tape bill. Usually they wheel them over here in a wheelbarrow. They're about this thick and give the pages a hernia getting them to us, just a stack of stuff and great whoop-de-do about it. In the end there is not a whole lot of stuff that in any way changes the situation for the ordinary Ontario citizen out there, but it certainly makes some significant changes where it comes to the powerful and the rich in our province getting their hands on more of the goods and the wealth and the booty of the government and of the province.

We have a bill here that is, as I have characterized in earlier speeches, a bit of a Trojan horse, particularly when you listen to the rhetoric of the government. It presents as an attempt by this government to streamline the way the government works and to make doing business, as they say, easier in the province, to make access by constituents to government services easier and all those kinds of things. There are in fact probably a couple of nuggets in here that are worth supporting, and we're glad they brought it forward. Some of the members earlier have talked about that.

We're here this afternoon, the same as we were for the first two really huge red tape bills that we debated, pushing this through in one afternoon, second reading. It's been referenced already this afternoon, but I think it's important to point out again that we really don't have time here to get into the detail and the nitty-gritty of these bills. So such things as the member for Niagara Centre presented just a few minutes ago get by us, sneak by us, and we don't know about them until we get a call from a constituent. Or perhaps we're having a beer one night in the Legion Hall in our community and some of the folks who have been smacked straight in the face by one of these pieces of business that are contained in these huge acts comes and tells us: "Look at what this is doing. Look at what this means to me. The little bit of money that I

thought I was getting or the little bit of assistance or help that I thought I was getting, all of a sudden is being in a very mean-spirited way taken away."

These oftentimes are folks who have given their whole life to creating the economy, to working very hard, to participating in their communities, actually going off to war, in the instance presented by the member for Niagara Centre, for the freedom that we all take for granted today. That's actually what happened.

This is, again, in my view, another Trojan horse, presenting as something friendly, interesting, in some instances maybe even perhaps exciting. But at the end of the day, when we open it up and the door swings open and the ladder comes down, we'll find that there's a lot of nastiness, there are a lot of nasty bits of business here that are going to affect a whole lot of people in some very negative ways, and that concerns me.

You can't pick up a paper these days without noting that there is a larger agenda at play in Ontario that I think we should be paying close attention to. I raise it here this afternoon in the context of this bill because it's bills like this, with the stuff that's in them, that we sometimes miss. They are so detailed and so large that they are actually playing into the phenomenon that's seeing a gap between those who have and those who don't have grow exponentially as each day goes by.

If you think for a second that this isn't well thought out, that there isn't somebody in the Premier's office—the member for St Catharines often refers to them as the whiz kids—who hasn't got this thought out bit by bit—it's like a jigsaw puzzle. It all fits together in the end. When we wake up in the morning and read the reports that come out in the newspapers and by way of press conferences etc, we find that on one hand our biggest corporations—our banks, our financial institutions—are making historically record-high profits, while on the other hand reports are coming from groups who are looking at the question of poverty and families and children and homelessness and they're saying that the situation is becoming more and more desperate with each day and each week that goes by.

1750

The other day I picked up the *Globe and Mail* on my way home, Friday, November 19, and there were two articles here which present very clearly the contrast that's out there. On one hand we have "Ontario Puts Squeeze on Welfare," and on the other hand, down here in another article, we have, "TD Rakes in \$3-Billion Profit." So on one hand we have people on welfare, those who are the most vulnerable and marginalized in our communities, being hit once again for who knows what reason. I guess they make good scapegoats and it makes for good political rhetoric. On the other hand we have the friends and benefactors of the government side, the rich and the famous, the banks and the big corporations, raking in historically record-high profits.

How are they doing that? Is there some magic economic development plan that this government has pulled together that is actually stimulating and firing this in-

crease in the profit margin of these big corporations? When we dig into it a little bit we find that actually that's not the case either, because in fact what's happening is that as the banks post record profits they're planning to cut more jobs.

There's nothing magical about this at all. It points very clearly and succinctly to the fact that in this province today, because of bills like the one we have in front of us—and I'll speak a little bit in a couple of minutes about how it affects my community in particular, by way of example of the kind of activity that is contributing to the very difficult economic times that we're experiencing in northern Ontario because this government isn't willing to take the time to actually analyze what impact and effect their agenda is having.

It's plain to see that this province is moving towards being a have and have-not province at breakneck speed and if somebody doesn't do something soon—particularly as we now begin to hear more and more people speaking of the effects of the program that's in place to cut programs and cut welfare and change regulation by way of red tape bills, which in fact should be helping people access the services they need in difficult times. It's taking that away, raising the bar, changing the definition, and we have more people falling further and further into debt.

This evening, I just want to share with you how pieces of this legislation that we're debating here today are going to affect very dramatically and radically the ability of communities to actually diversify an economy, to take advantage of opportunity that's there and do something exciting and new. If you put a piece in this bill about amalgamating—and it presents at first blush as rather harmless and non-consequential, but if you look at merging the Ontario Lottery Corp with the gaming corporation, for all the reasons that perhaps people might want to do something like that, under the control of one man, a good friend of the Premier's, Mr Barbaro, we begin to see how this eventually plays into the hands of the high and the mighty, those who have, the powerful elite in this province.

We have the Ontario Lottery Corp operating out of Sault Ste Marie. We had a long debate in this House and across the province and particularly in Sault Ste Marie over the last three or four years about the future of that particular entity and whether it should be restructured. Studies were done and efforts were made by the then chair and president of the corporation, who happened to be two different people, because at that time the Liberal and NDP governments felt that accountability would be enhanced if you had two different people in those jobs. It was decided that, yes, there were efficiencies that could be had. They found \$50 million worth of them. I challenged that figure and I challenged some of the detail in that report. However, they went ahead anyway.

They made a promise to Sault Ste Marie when that report came out that they were going to leave the headquarters in our community. When that corporation was moved to Sault Ste Marie, it was moved there for a very

definite purpose, and that was to show to the rest of the province and to the rest of the world that you could take a corporation like that, you could take a business like that and move it to a community like the Soo, which is quite a distance from Toronto, and still make it work and generate profit. In fact, from the day that the lottery corporation arrived in Sault Ste Marie, it continued to make profit every year, ever-increasing profit year over year for every year it was there.

Now we see first of all, by way of the movements that we began to detect over the last few months in Sault Ste Marie, that more and more of the top-echelon executives are moving to Toronto. Mr Barbaro now has an office up on Yonge Street that has on its nameplate the Ontario Lottery Corp and the gaming corporation. That's where he is operating out of. You put that together then with the piece in this red tape bill today which is going to amalgamate the gaming corporation and the Ontario Lottery Corp and, alas, the writing is on the wall.

Here we have a government that says they understand that there is a challenge in the north and that, when you sit and talk with them off the record or behind the scenes, will commiserate and say, "Yes, we have to do something. We have to stimulate an economy up there. We have to develop new jobs. We have to work with communities to see if we can find some way of renewing that economy," while at the same time they're willing to take away what is already there. What is the point of attracting new opportunities at the same time as you're taking away what's already there and profitable, a crown corporation that is making money year over year for the government of Ontario, that has shown itself able to operate in a fashion that is efficient and effective, amalgamating it now with the gaming corporation and putting it under the guidance or tutelage of one gentleman who happens to be better situated, perhaps because of other things that are going on in his life, in the Toronto area, and remove from our community that one activity that gave us all such tremendous hope back in the late 1980s and early 1990s as we gathered and watched the building go up and the people who were going to work in that building, under the aegis of the Ontario Lottery Corp, move into town? The new energy, the excitement that it gave us all, the contribution those people made not just to the business community but to the cultural life of Sault Ste Marie was phenomenal.

But now we have a government, when you put together the amalgamation that's happening in this piece of legislation of the Ontario Lottery Corp and the gaming corporation with what we detect is happening in Sault Ste Marie right now—and we're going to lose that. We have to consider the impact that will have directly in terms of jobs, very highly qualified, high-paying jobs. As matter of fact, there was a time not so long ago in Sault Ste Marie that people aspired to working for the lottery corporation. It was the place to work in town. People were leaving other corporations to get a job at the lottery corporation because everybody assumed it was going to be there for as long as it was profitable, for as long as it was

generating revenue for the government that was acceptable and in the black.

Interjections.

Mr Martin: "Take a deep breath. Have a drink." I know. Thanks.

You put together the impact that taking those jobs away is going to have with the loss of the goods and services that corporation used to purchase and contract from the small and medium-sized business community in Sault Ste Marie, and you put that together again with the symbolic value that that corporation had in the Soo—we felt while the corporation was there that we had a chance of latching on to this so-called new economy that's out there that is based more on telecommunications and information sharing etc than what we've traditionally based our economy on up there, and we were excited. But you take that away and you send out a new message to the rest of Ontario and Canada and the world. In Sault Ste Marie, we have just finished a very aggressive, positive, constructive and exciting campaign of promoting Sault Ste Marie as a good place to invest in. We highlighted the lottery corporation. We even had a picture of Ron Barbaro in there, but he's not going to be there any more. The headquarters of the lottery corporation is not going to be there any more. It's gone. They're saying they can't do business up in Sault Ste Marie any more in the same way. They can't have the headquarters of a corporation of that nature that far away from the Golden Horseshoe. What kind of message does that send out?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Private sector.

Mr Martin: Yes, private sector, and to hell with everybody else. What kind of message does that send to the rest of the world re investing in Sault Ste Marie or northern Ontario or any place other than the Golden Horseshoe and Toronto? What sense does it make to hammer a community that is so important, a very essential part of this province, in that very significant and serious way? I have to say to you, alas and sadly, it plays in again to the program of this government, to clear the way, to open Ontario for business through the removal of red tape that's built up over the years, through inquests and inquiries about deaths and accidents etc so that business can come in and high-grade, as they always have, the best of what we have to offer and make off like bandits and leave the rest of us holding the bag.

I have on a couple of occasions in this House referenced the analogy that this is to what went on in Ireland some years ago, where the potato famine happened. It actually wasn't a question of there not being enough food, it was a question of who owned the food and who was making money on it. I just want to read one small piece in wrapping here today, because it certainly drives home the issue that I'm trying to raise. It says, "It is true that there is a potato famine in practically every part of the country, but there is corn and wheat and meat and dairy products in abundance. For putting his hands on any of this, the tenant is liable to prison, even to execution or to exile," which is what we're finding is happening to so many of us who don't happen to belong to the

elite class in this province, who don't happen to have the power or the money, and that's sad.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I just wanted a point of order with respect to the speech by the member for Niagara Centre on the War Veterans Burial Act. The question was about us repealing that act and no longer allowing a \$15 municipal grant to a person who is a homeless indigent to be buried. The point of order is simply that the bill was repealed because the municipality is totally responsible for the burial of all indigent people. Therefore, the fact is there was no point in—

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Further debate?

Mr Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; there will be a 5-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 11 be deferred until Monday, November 29, 1999." Signed by the chief government whip and deputy House leader. So be it.

It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock on Monday, November 29.

The House adjourned at 1805.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Justice and Social Policy/ Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 25 novembre 1999

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Loi de 1999 sur le patrimoine marin de l'Ontario, projet de loi 13, <i>M. Barrett</i>	
Adoptée	839

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 1999 commémorant le sergent Rick McDonald (poursuites en vue d'appréhender des suspects), projet de loi 22, <i>M. Tsubouchi</i>	
Adoptée	841

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 visant à réduire les formalités administratives, projet de loi 11, <i>M. Runciman</i>	
Vote différé	877

AUTRES TRAVAUX

Campagne du ruban blanc <i>M. Kennedy</i>	
.....	848

CONTENTS

Thursday 25 November 1999

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Ontario Marine Heritage Act, 1999,	
Bill 13, <i>Mr Barrett</i>	
Mr Barrett.....	823, 830
Mr Crozier.....	824
Mr Marchese.....	825
Mr Clark.....	827
Mr Peters.....	827
Mr Kormos.....	828
Mr Beaubien.....	828
Mrs Elliott.....	829
Mr Tascona.....	830
Agreed to.....	839
Professional accreditation, private	
members' notice of motion number 6,	
<i>Mr Ruprecht</i>	
Mr Ruprecht.....	830, 838
Mr Kormos.....	832
Mrs Molinari.....	833
Mr McGuinty.....	834
Mr Tilson.....	834
Mr Gerretsen.....	836
Mr Marchese.....	836
Mr Phillips.....	837
Mrs Pupatello.....	837
Mrs McLeod.....	837
Agreed to.....	839

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gasoline prices	
Mr Bradley.....	839
Grey Cup	
Mr Skarica.....	839
Mandatory drug testing	
Mr Cordiano.....	836
Bennett Health Care Centre	
Mr Chudleigh.....	840
Firefighters	
Mr Levac.....	840
Alcohol and gaming inspectors	
Mr Kormos.....	840
Huron Heights Early Learning Centre	
Mr Mazzilli.....	841
Autism services	
Mr Kennedy.....	841
Premier's Research Excellence Award	
Mr Stewart.....	846

FIRST READINGS

Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial	
Act (Suspect Apprehension	
Pursuits), 1999, Bill 22,	
<i>Mr Tsubouchi</i>	
Agreed to.....	841

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Police pursuit legislation	
Mr Tsubouchi.....	844
Mr Bartolucci.....	845
Mr Levac.....	845
Ms Martel.....	845
Mr Kormos.....	846

ORAL QUESTIONS

Access to professions and trades	
Mr Ruprecht.....	849
Mrs Cunningham.....	849

Hospital funding	
Mrs Pupatello.....	850
Mrs Witmer.....	850

Family Responsibility Office	
Mr Hampton.....	851
Mr Flaherty.....	851
Ms Martel.....	851
Mr Kormos.....	851

Impaired drivers	
Mr Kormos.....	852
Mr Tsubouchi.....	852

Food banks	
Mr Agostino.....	852
Mr Hodgson.....	852

Child poverty	
Mr Newman.....	853
Mrs Marland.....	853

Northern health travel grant	
Mrs McLeod.....	854
Mr Hudak.....	854

Mayor of Toronto	
Ms Mushinski.....	854
Mr Stockwell.....	855

Rent regulation	
Mr Bisson.....	855
Mr Clement.....	855

Oak Ridges moraine	
Mr Colle.....	856
Mr Clement.....	856

Immigrant training	
Mr Hastings.....	856
Mrs Cunningham.....	856

Students with special needs	
Mr Kennedy.....	857
Mrs Ecker.....	857

PETITIONS

Henley rowing course	
Mr Bradley.....	858
School safety	
Mr O'Toole.....	858
Ipperwash Provincial Park	
Mr Phillips.....	859

SECOND READINGS

Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999,	
Bill 11, <i>Mr Runciman</i>	
Mr Runciman.....	859
Mr O'Toole.....	861
Mr Newman.....	863
Mr Hastings.....	864
Mr Colle.....	865
Ms Martel.....	868
Mr Bradley.....	871
Mr Kormos.....	872
Mr Phillips.....	873
Mr Martin.....	874
Vote deferred.....	877

OTHER BUSINESS

Unanimous consent	
Mr Kormos.....	842, 843
Mr Sterling.....	842
Mr Gerretsen.....	843
Ms Churley.....	843
Mr Bisson.....	843
The Speaker.....	844

Visitor	
The Speaker.....	846

Adjournment debate	
Mr Sterling.....	846

White ribbon campaign	
Mr Martin.....	846
Mrs Johns.....	847
Mr Kennedy.....	848

Continued overleaf



No. 19

N° 19

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 29 November 1999

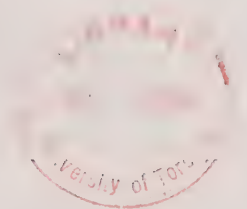
Lundi 29 novembre 1999

**Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr**

**Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

**Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers**



Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 novembre 1999

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BLAIR TULLY

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rose-dale): I rise today for a sombre purpose. On June 6 this year, Ontarians suffered a tragic and untimely loss when one of our finest public servants, Mr Blair Tully, lost his courageous battle with cancer. He was just 53 years old.

Blair was a dedicated servant of three communities: Ontario, Cabbagetown and, most importantly, his family. Blair served five different ministries in the Ontario government. Three times he was appointed deputy minister. I first met him when he was a dynamic young deputy at tourism, where I was executive assistant to Minister Hugh O'Neil. An economist by trade, Blair served governments of all political stripes and was eulogized by Premiers Davis, Peterson and Rae.

Blair Tully expanded the definition of public service beyond the realm of public policy development. He served with equal enthusiasm as a volunteer in his home community of Cabbagetown. His community has commemorated this commitment by renaming its annual fundraising run Blair's Run.

Finally, Blair was a devoted servant to his most intimate community, his family. Here was where he made his greatest mark. The last time I saw him, he was buying hockey equipment for his son. Blair was ever the hockey dad, even as he fought cancer.

Blair's wife, Marilyn, and two sons, Keegan and Marshal, are with us today in the west members' gallery. I would like to extend condolences on behalf of all Ontarians.

BONNIE LEDSON

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I am pleased to rise today to honour my constituent Bonnie Ledson. The Caledon Chamber of Commerce has chosen her to be Caledon's Woman of the Year for 1999.

Bonnie Ledson was an elementary teacher for 37 years with the Peel Board of Education. She also served as vice-principal for Alloo Public School and as principal at

Williams Parkway Public School. Bonnie retired from teaching in March 1998.

Over the years, Bonnie has been involved in numerous community organizations, including serving on the board of directors of Family Transition Place and on the Headwaters Health Care Centre fundraising committee. Bonnie's enthusiasm has brought in several major donations for the Headwaters Health Care Centre's "Bring in the CAT" campaign, which will bring a CAT scanner to the local hospital. Bonnie has also served with the Caledon Meals on Wheels program. Last year she hosted the first annual Caledon Community Services Christmas open house.

Despite these numerous activities, Bonnie is a devoted family member. Her daughter, Vicki Stafford, who nominated her for this award, says that Bonnie has always been her mentor as well as her mother. Vicki went on to say that without her mother's constant support to the family, Bonnie's husband, George Ledson, would not have achieved such success with his business, Cavalier Transportation in Bolton.

As you can see, Bonnie has achieved the perfect balance of career and family life that we all strive for. She has also been able to assist the community in countless ways. I am pleased to have the opportunity to recognize Bonnie Ledson in the Legislature today.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'd like to put the Harris government on notice that their laissez-faire attitude towards the northern economy is not working. While we may see some job growth in southern Ontario, the same is not occurring at all in northern Ontario. I remind the Minister of Northern Development and Mines that this year the papermaker Abitibi Consolidated in Iroquois Falls laid off 240 workers. Now that company is looking at reducing another paper machine, which would lay off an additional 200 workers. If that were to happen, it would make Iroquois Falls a ghost town. Businesses are already closing as that layoff starts to take its effect in Iroquois Falls. Any further layoffs are going to hurt that town.

I ask the Minister of Northern Development and Mines—I want to go see him in a couple of minutes, and I'm glad he's here—to take a more proactive approach, working with the companies, especially the resource-based companies that are the basis of our economy in the

north, to make sure we can retain those jobs, and to help them expand and modernize some of those plants that have been with us for a long time.

The world is changing, and our economy is changing. But in northern Ontario the resource industry is still our base. We have to make sure those companies are competitive worldwide, because all sorts of companies are now creating paper.

I would say to the minister—and I'm going to talk to him later and I hope he can meet with the mayor of Iroquois Falls, Ken Graham, either this week or this weekend, when he comes up to Sudbury—we have to do something to preserve those jobs in Iroquois Falls.

1340

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On Friday, special adviser Hugh Thomas made public his final recommendations on restructuring in Sudbury. Needless to say, I have serious concerns with the proposed plan.

The new single city of Sudbury wipes out the seven outlying area municipalities, all of which have unique historical and linguistic differences. The six new potential wards do not reflect shared communities of interest, especially when it comes to their rural versus urban makeup.

The new city with a population of 163,000 people is geographically larger than Toronto, yet the adviser recommends governance by 12 part-time councillors, two per ward, plus a mayor elected at large. It's ridiculous to expect 12 part-time councillors to manage all of the issues concerning planning, development, public health, conservation, library and utility services etc by one committee of council. Any savings from the fewer politicians will clearly go to the hiring of more middle and senior managers who will be running the new corporation with no accountability to the voters.

The transition costs are estimated at \$18 million, and the adviser made it clear that in the event the Harris government did not fund this as a loan, the new city should apply existing reserves to pick up the costs. Wrong. If the Harris government is going to force this restructuring and amalgamation, then this same government can pick up all of the costs associated with it. Our regional chair is writing to the minister to make this point.

Clearly, the level of anticipated savings will be used to sell this deal. If only it were so. As the Harris government continues to download services onto municipalities, residents should not be fooled into believing they will see any tax relief.

DEAL PROGRAM

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): It's my pleasure to share with you an encouraging story about today's youth from my home riding of Carleton-Gloucester.

Several students from Gloucester High School, in partnership with other schools from around the world and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, have joined together to create a Web site specifically tailored for other school-aged children. The Drug Education and Awareness for Life program, or DEAL for short, is a unique opportunity for students to participate in both an interactive as well as an educational experience.

DEAL allows for the students in Gloucester High to become active in the fight against drugs and in promoting a positive message. The students involved in this project have learned valuable lessons in teamwork, problem solving and managing change. While the Web site undergoes constant updates, students have kept on top of technological change and learned about the intricacies of Web design, undoubtedly a necessary skill for the future.

In short, this initiative allows for some very real hands-on learning. It highlights the commitment that this government has made in ensuring that the province's classrooms are adequately funded to provide students with such learning opportunities.

While we often hear about the negative elements of today's youth, there are, as evidenced by this case, many positives flowing from Ontario's younger population. I, for one, applaud the initiatives taking place in Carleton-Gloucester. The business and technology department and students from Gloucester High School should be applauded for their proactiveness in such a worthwhile and positive initiative.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I am very concerned about the state of the health care system in my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North. Deep cuts to our area hospitals have left many of them with serious deficits which threaten services and then reverberate throughout the entire system.

The serious shortage of general practitioners is leaving a large number of my constituents without a family doctor, and access to our dwindling specialist complement translates into long waiting periods for appointments or forced travel to far-off centres. This shortage is also affecting our hospital care in Thunder Bay right now, as physician burnout may result in the shifting of services that we all had hoped to maintain on our two present hospitals sites.

The fact is that much of the hope for improvement to health care in our region is tied to the construction of our new acute care hospital in Thunder Bay. Many of us truly believe that our physician crisis will be much improved once our new site is up and running, but we need the government's help to ensure this vital project moves forward. While the Minister of Health has acknowledged that the restructuring of the hospital system across the province requires more capital funding, she has not yet acknowledged that need in Thunder Bay.

Minister, regardless of any previous understanding of the Thunder Bay hospital agreement, you must recognize

that we need and deserve the same level of capital funding for our new hospital as you have granted to every other ministry-approved project across the province.

Seventy per cent funding support from the province is crucial to our ability to move forward. We need the Premier and the Minister of Health to at least put us on an equal footing with the rest of the province. Anything less will seriously damage our ability to move this vital project forward.

CHRISTKINDL MARKET

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Each year Festivals and Events Ontario, a provincial organization which provides support to festival and event organizers, presents awards to honour excellence. This year, the award for best new festival or event in Ontario was bestowed on Kitchener's Christkindl Market.

Now in its third year, Christkindl Market will be held at the Kitchener City Hall from Thursday, December 9, through Sunday, December 12.

The Kitchener event commemorates a cherished German tradition that is more than 400 years old. The Christkindl markets grew as the custom of giving gifts at Christmas became widespread. They became a popular venue for the sale of toys and other presents for children, for craft and other gift items and for seasonal food specialties. Today Christkindl markets are world-renowned for their ceremonies, festivities and entertainment, as well as their outstanding selections of gifts and food.

Kitchener's Christkindl Market rivals any European market. Approximately 80 vendors offer visitors the opportunity to view and purchase a wide variety of hand-crafted wood toys, intricate Christmas ornaments, carved and decorated cherubs and angels, handmade fabric dolls, nutcrackers, glass work, folk art and other seasonal items.

Others will tempt you with barbecued sausages, goulash soup, apple cider, sauerkraut, perogies, cabbage rolls, stollen, mulled wine, schnapps, grog and roast chicken.

There will also be free entertainment.

Mr Speaker, I invite you and all members of the Legislature to join me at Kitchener's Christkindl Market to discover why Festivals and Events Ontario chose it as the best new festival or event. You will not be disappointed.

DOCTORS' SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My community of Sudbury and the northeast continues to reel from the government's inaction on the physician shortage problem. In Sudbury alone, we are short an outlandish 26 specialists. We need cardiologists, neurologists, gynecologists, pediatricians, psychiatrists, ophthalmologists—you name the specialist; we have a shortage in Sudbury.

What makes this tragedy even worse is that we in the north have given the minister the solutions to our problems.

Dr David Boyle is in the gallery today. He, along with several northeastern doctors, has co-authored two reports entitled, *From Crisis to Stability*. These documents provide the answers to the shortage of doctors in our community.

"In the north, by the north, for the north" is another project which supplies to this problem. Devised by northerners, it will work for northerners. But again, the government refuses to fund this initiative properly.

Let's be honest here, today. Dalton McGuinty and the northern Ontario Liberal caucus have given you solutions to this acute problem. If you refuse to listen to us, then listen to the experts who are in the gallery today, listen to our northern doctors. The reality is: Our doctors in the north have the answers. We need the government to listen to these experts and make the commitment today to fund "In the North, by the North, for the North" and the solution as found in *From Crisis to Stability*. To do anything less is to show disdain and discrimination against northerners and their doctors.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF OLDER PERSONS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Today, I am pleased to stand in the House to congratulate those people in Durham riding who are involved in our government's Community Partnership projects as part of the International Year of Older Persons.

The seven members of Durham's IYOP committee received an excellent response from a variety of community organizations. Many creative ideas on how to commemorate this very special year were put forward. I would like to take this opportunity to personally thank in public the dedicated individuals who served on this committee: Annabelle Sissons; Harold Hammond; Mavis Carlton; Kent and Doug Farnale; Sheri Jackson and Sally Barrie.

What was so encouraging to me was to see the projects that were undertaken that involved and benefited the entire community not just seniors. People like Gweneth Thompson, Wayne Burrell and Bill Bagnell—people of all ages, as the theme entails. I was privileged to attend several IYOP events throughout the celebration with all of my constituents.

The organizations that participated in this program were the Bowmanville Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion; Big Brothers, Clarington; the Blackstock recreation complex; Community Memorial Hospital Foundation; Port Perry Senior Citizens' Club; Marnwood Lifecare Centre; the Clarington Older Adult Association and many more.

It was a privilege and a pleasure that our minister, Cam Jackson, and our Premier initiated this for all 130 ridings across this province.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED INTERIOR
DESIGNERS OF ONTARIO ACT, 1999

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on November 30 and December 1, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

DEFERRED VOTES

RED TAPE REDUCTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
LES FORMALITÉS ADMINISTRATIVES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 11, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting four new Acts / Projet de loi 11, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant quatre nouvelles lois.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby

Hardeman, Ernie
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Skanca, Toni

Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gill, Raminder

Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Lankin, Frances
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario

Martel, Shelley
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 37.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Yes.

To which committee shall the bill be referred?

Interjection.

The Speaker: The bill has been referred to the general government committee.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HÔPITAL MONTFORT
MONTFORD HOSPITAL

M. Dalton McGuinty (chef de l'opposition): Ma première question aujourd'hui est pour la ministre de la Santé.

Pendant trois ans vous vous en êtes prise au seul hôpital d'enseignement de langue française en Ontario, l'hôpital Montfort. D'abord, vous avez essayé de le fermer. Ensuite, vous avez réduit son budget et son mandat. Vous avez constamment attaqué sa tradition qui est d'offrir des soins de qualité tout en formant des professionnels de la santé qui parlent français.

Aujourd'hui, les tribunaux ont dit que vous avez tort. Les tribunaux ont déterminé que vos attaques arrogantes contre cet hôpital sont en fait des attaques contre la communauté francophone.

Madame la ministre, admettez-vous maintenant que vous avez tort ?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yes, I understand that today the divisional court has announced the decision regarding Montfort Hospital's application for judicial review of the HSRC directives, and I understand that these directions have been set aside. The Divisional Court today has asked the commission to reconsider its decision to the hospital, and it is my understanding that the commission will be reviewing the decision and they will be making recommendations to me shortly.

M. McGuinty : C'est déjà assez que les tribunaux soient obligés de protéger les droits fondamentaux, les droits élémentaires de la population, parce que le gouvernement ne le fait pas. Mais dans ce cas-ci, on parle d'un gouvernement qui a attaqué les droits des francophones, un groupe minoritaire ici en Ontario, qui devraient avoir la protection de leur gouvernement et non pas une attaque.

Pendant près de trois ans, vous vous êtes attaqués à cet hôpital. Allez-vous enfin cesser vos attaques contre les francophones de l'Ontario et allez-vous vous engager à redonner à Montfort son statut d'hôpital d'enseignement offrant tous les services ?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I would indicate that the directions that were issued had been done so by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. They are going to be reviewing the decision and they will be making recommendations.

I think it's important also to remember that we in Ontario have undertaken a significant strengthening of our health resources. In fact, we were the very last province to undertake the restructuring. As a result of this initiative, we are continuing to see a strengthening of our health system, our hospital system. We are expanding the number of cancer centres, the number of cardiac care centres, and the funding for the priorities programs as well. We will do everything we can to ensure that people in Ontario have access to the quality services they need and deserve.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you attacked the Montfort Hospital and, by so doing, the courts have ruled today that when you did that, you attacked the rights of francophones to health care in their own language and the rights of francophones to training in their own language. You can no longer hide behind the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The ball is in your court.

Francophones don't look to some commission to protect their rights as a minority group in Ontario. They look to you and they look to your government. They said you were badly mistaken, that you did not stand up and protect the rights of francophones in Ontario to health care in their own language and to education in their own language. Will you now do what you should have done back then? Will you restore the Montfort Hospital to a full-service, French-language teaching hospital and, by so doing, stand up for francophone rights in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I just stress the fact that the commission has undertaken to make directions which will respond to the needs of our changing population.

Unfortunately, previous Liberal and NDP governments refused to undertake this task; they took the easy way out and they allowed the health system to move forward without responding.

Certainly we will await the recommendation and decision of the commission. Our government is prepared to work with each and every hospital in order to ensure that the needs of the patients are met.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The second question is also for the Minister of Health. Minister, I want to talk to you about a growing health care crisis in Ontario, and some would argue, the most serious and grievous crisis of all, and that is the fact that today, according to your own ministry officials, there are 99 communities which are suffering from doctor shortages. That means thousands and thousands of Ontario families are having to resort to emergency hospital care, or worse, they're doing without completely.

Your government has been on watch for five years in connection with this matter. You have done nothing but stand aside as a somewhat disinterested onlooker as this problem has continued to become more and more pressing. When are you going to make announcement in this House to do something specifically that's going to address this problem in a real and concrete way?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition refuses to acknowledge the fact that our government has actually taken unprecedented, very significant steps to increase the distribution of physicians in this province.

Also, if the leader takes a look at the report that ICES released recently, the number of physicians in this province has actually increased in the past seven years. The problem is distribution. We have a problem of distribution, and we have a problem of very much changing patterns of physician practice. That's why we have asked Dr McKendry to take a look at the scope of the problem, because simply increasing the number of physicians is still not going to ensure that the physicians locate in the areas where they are needed. We're still going to have the issue there in the urban, the north and the rural. We want to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time has expired. Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: Let's take a look at some of the facts here, Minister. In 1996 there were 63 underserved communities in Ontario; today there are 99. In 1996 we were short fewer than 100 doctors in Ontario; today we are short 422. That's in excess of a 400% increase on your watch. You guys have been in charge for over four years now and this matter is getting worse and worse every day, to the point where one in four Ontarians does not have access to a family doctor. That, Madam Minister, is a crisis.

When are you going to do something to lend some real assistance to those thousands and thousands of Ontario families who can't get access to a family doctor in their own community?

1410

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, I would just stress that our government has actually taken unprecedented, positive steps forward that certainly were not undertaken by previous governments. In fact, we have a \$30-million initiative that helps with coverage in small hospitals. Also, if you take a look at the statistics, you will see that in northern Ontario, as a result of our positive initiatives, we have actually increased the supply of physicians in the north.

We will continue to work with the Ontario Medical Association. We will continue to work with the Ontario Hospital Association. We will continue to do what we can to see this continuing increase of physicians in the north and in the urban and rural areas, and with the co-operation of the—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time has expired. Final supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: If you want to talk co-operation, we have put forward a number of positive policy proposals which you have failed to act on. You've done nothing. When it comes to this matter, you've done nothing more than take out observer status. You are a disinterested, removed onlooker.

We've had a 400% increase in the number of doctors that we are short in this province. Here's an idea that we have put forward before. One in four practising doctors today in Ontario are foreign-trained. There are hundreds, possibly thousands, of other international medical graduates living in Ontario who could be providing health care today were it not for barriers to licensing. We have put forward a very good idea to help those doctors begin to practise here in Ontario without in any way lowering standards, and ensuring that our own children have opportunities in our own medical schools. We've done that. It's a positive proposal and you have failed to act on it.

When are you going to admit that when it comes to the doctor shortage in Ontario, you intend to do nothing except stand by as a disinterested observer?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I would indicate that our government has taken a leadership role. In fact, this past September when we were at the federal-provincial health ministers' conference, I raised this issue as a priority. All of the provinces and territories did agree that we would move forward and we would be presenting a report in the early new year to see how, collaboratively, we could address this issue.

Also, I would just like to read a couple of quotes of recognition for the work that our government has done.

Calvin Gutkin, the chief executive officer of the College of Family Physicians, writes on November 16: "We have confidence that recent strategies being addressed by your government—including ... primary care reform pilot projects" and other innovative solutions

"are, without a doubt, the appropriate directions to be taking."

I would hasten to add that people throughout the province—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time has expired.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. As you know, the Ontario Municipal Board is in the process right now of making a very important decision, that decision being how many city councillors there should be in the new city of Toronto, the megacity. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw that your Minister of Municipal Affairs, just as the OMB is trying to make this decision, publicly writes a letter advocating what the decision should be.

Can you tell me, Deputy Premier, is it now the norm with your government that you ignore judicial independence, that you routinely tell judges and other quasi-judicial tribunals how they should decide cases?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I don't know of any such letter. If he's referring to the letter that the Minister of Municipal Affairs wrote to the mayor of Toronto dated November 24, the letter doesn't say any such thing. It asks the mayor of Toronto what action, if any, he and Toronto council are going to take with respect to reduction of council size. He will know, undoubtedly, that is not the issue that's before the OMB. The minister didn't write to the OMB; he wrote to the mayor of the city of Toronto.

Mr Hampton: The Deputy Premier knows that judicial independence demands that while a judge or a quasi-judicial tribunal is trying to make a decision, a cabinet minister isn't out there publicly advocating what the decision should be. As soon as a cabinet minister does that, you take away judicial independence.

I'm not the only one who believes that. Your Premier has said, "It would be inappropriate to intervene in any quasi-judicial body, and I would insist that members of the executive council not do that." Even one of the members of Toronto city council has said, "How can the minister ask us to look at making these kinds of changes when the matter is before a quasi-judicial tribunal?"

The members of the OMB aren't sequestered. They read the newspapers. They hear what the minister said. They hear what the minister is advocating. You must recognize that this is completely contrary to the rules of judicial independence. When are you going to ask the minister to resign, Deputy Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, the OMB has no jurisdiction whatsoever over council size. That is not the issue that's before the OMB. The issue before the OMB is dealing with ward boundaries. The OMB can't determine council size. It has no legal jurisdiction with which to do so. The only two bodies that could possibly do that would be that the city of Toronto could ask the province of Ontario to do something about council size. Ultimately,

the legislation would have to be passed here in this House by the government of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Deputy Premier, I find it remarkable that when your Premier or you or the Attorney General or the Solicitor General is asked any question about Ipperwash, you immediately respond, "This matter is before the consideration of a judge; we have no comment." But when it comes to a position that your government wants to force on someone else, you're out there telling the press very publicly; you're out there telling the OMB members.

You know that the OMB members are in fact appointed by the minister responsible for municipal affairs. You know that the municipal affairs minister has almost direct control over the OMB in terms of its operation. You know that the members of the OMB are going to receive this signal.

The question is this: Do you believe in judicial independence, or is your government routinely going to tell quasi-judicial decision-makers and judges how to make up their minds?

Hon Mr Eves: Yes, I believe in judicial independence, but the letter that the minister wrote to the mayor of Toronto has absolutely nothing to do with judicial independence and has absolutely nothing to do with the very issue before the OMB.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is to the Minister of Health. You will know that because of the health care needs of Hamiltonians, the pressures of that service that's required, the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp is coming up \$40 million short due to your cuts. They stood up to your bullying, much like our school board has, and said to you that the health care of Hamiltonians comes first, not your bottom-line budget-cutting to feed your free gift to your wealthy friends.

We have now received a copy of a document that states that in order to deal with these fiscal pressures that you're placing on our hospital boards, they are now going to make it a priority to focus their policy on "the earliest possible discharge of patients from the hospital." It says that patients have to be moved out of emergency and into in-patient wards, and that these moves will occur at any time and "may well result in a patient located in a hall or sunroom." Further, it says that they will not be adding any staff to accommodate these transfers.

Minister, my questions to you: (1) Is this type of policy acceptable to you under any condition; and (2) will you ensure there's enough funding for the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp so they don't have to—

1420

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Regarding the issue of health in Hamilton, as the member well knows, we have actually been increasing funding for hospitals. This fiscal year

we've increased funding for patient care by nearly \$400 million in new funding. Last year hospitals received \$6.83 billion, and this year they'll be receiving \$7.2 billion.

We are investing in new priority areas: nursing, emergency rooms, neonatal care, cancer services and cardiac care.

The member also knows that we have been working with the hospital in Hamilton, just as we are working with other hospitals throughout the province, in order to resolve any issues and ensure that they can provide the high quality of patient care that is needed.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Minister, that's nice PR, but you're missing the point here. This is a policy on acute bed access. It's being implemented on December 6, 1999. It talks about the reality of patients being rotated out of emergency, into hallways, into sunrooms, into rooms that are "closed" and no staff being added. There's a deficit here. There's a deficit in hospitals across the province.

I was in Windsor a week ago. The hospitals there are facing a combined \$16-million deficit. All of these hospitals are saying they have met your efficiency requirement. They can't cut any more without neglecting the health needs of the patients in their regions.

This policy just doesn't fly. Are you going to accept, because of the cuts you made originally in hospital funding, because restructuring hasn't moved forward fast enough, because you haven't invested in the community, that patients' health needs are not going to be met, that patients are going to be left in hallways and left in sunrooms by now official policy? Is that acceptable to you?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member full well knows, our government has made a tremendous commitment to health care. We have increased funding from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion, and certainly our number one priority is always to ensure that patients receive high-quality care, and I'm sure that hospital CEOs throughout Ontario are working with their staff to ensure that all patients will continue to do so.

In fact, I just indicate that today hospitals receive 40% of the ministry expenditure of \$20.6 billion. The Ottawa Citizen on November 1 said, "Certainly the province cannot be faulted for its overall level of support for hospitals, since it's spending \$7.2 billion a year on them."

We'll continue to work with the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre and every other hospital to ensure that patient care is—

The Speaker: The minister's time has expired.

VISITOR

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I know you will want to acknowledge in the members' gallery today the presence of a former member of this House, and a former minister

of the crown, and the president of our party, Mr Greg Sorbara.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order. I had that on my list to do.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. You told the Ontario Hospital Association last week that there's no shortage of physicians in this province, and in this Legislature last week you used a recent report from the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences to back up that statement.

As my leader has said, denying that there's a physician shortage in this province is simply denying what is reality for people in communities across Ontario. But the report that you keep referring to does not say there is no doctor shortage. What the report says is that the decision about how many doctors we should have is a social policy decision. The author of the report says that the decision about whether we should have more doctors is a judgment, and that puts the ball right back in your court. It is clearly a question of your government's priorities. It is a question of whether you believe that 25% of the people in this province should be without a family doctor.

Minister, will you stop misusing reports in order to defend your government's refusal to make the most basic health care needs of Ontarians a priority? Will you acknowledge that there's not just a distribution problem but a problem of shortage of physicians?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member well knows, our government has identified health as a priority. In fact, that's why the spending has increased. Again, I stress it's increased from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion.

Also, in order to identify the true scope of the issue in the province of Ontario, whether we're dealing with distribution or whether we're dealing with supply, that was the reason we asked Dr Robert McKendry to take on the task of taking a look at all of the information, including the most recent ICES report, and identifying for us the scope of the problem and the cause of the problem. We await his report. That report will be coming this year. Once his report is issued, we will move forward with short-term solutions and we will put in place long-term solutions as well.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, we said that you would use the McKendry study in order to stall on dealing with this crucial issue. We're right. It was due the end of September. It's the end of November; we're still waiting for the report. But in the meantime, people across this province cannot get access to a doctor when they need one. They believe there is a physician shortage and they are right.

The Chan report tells us why people can't get a family doctor, why they have to wait to see specialists. The report says there are fewer physicians per capita than there were in 1993-94. It says the number of full-time

family doctors practising in Ontario is decreasing. It says more people are going into subspecialties instead of general medicine or general surgery. It says that new graduates are leaving the province and that our physician population is aging. Family doctors are no longer doing obstetrics and minor surgery and emergency coverage, as they might have done when they were younger. Put all of that together and surely you can understand we have a physician shortage.

Will you understand that until we fix the supply problem, we cannot fix the distribution problem? How much longer are you going to avoid dealing with this critical issue?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the member opposite knows, since 1995 we have been putting in place many initiatives. In fact, it's thanks to our initiatives that in her community in northern Ontario we actually have more physicians today than we've had in the past. That's the reason why we have Dr McKendry doing the report, because, as she has indicated, there are many causes. So let's accurately identify them, let's see how large it is and let's move forward and continue to provide the incentive programs that are necessary to provide people with the physicians and the specialists they need throughout Ontario.

In fact, it was our member Helen Johns who put forward the initiative of ensuring that tuition be made available to students who wanted to practice in underserved areas. We are developing that recommendation and we will be bringing that forward.

BIOTECHNOLOGY

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. Ontario, and more specifically Ottawa, is the centre for biotechnology initiatives. Biotechnology is an industry that is growing and having a very important impact.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member take his seat. Order. I cannot hear the question.

Mr Coburn: Biotechnology is an industry that is growing and having a very important impact on the people of Ontario and the world. Minister, what are we doing to ensure the innovations created by Ontarians and by residents of Ottawa in this important field are being supported and advanced?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Biotechnology, in spite of the controversy about genetically modified foods that is swirling around these days, is a very important part of the Ontario economy. In fact, experts expect this \$300-million sector in Ontario today to grow to about \$1 billion worth of economic activity and to create about 6,500 more highly skilled jobs.

To spur along this growth, earlier this month, on behalf of the government, I announced in Ottawa a \$20-million biotechnology commercialization fund. We

hope that Ottawa and areas like Kingston, Hamilton, Guelph, London and Toronto will take the opportunity to apply to this \$20-million fund—it grows to \$40 million with private and public sector support—and that they will help us help our young scientists get their biotechnology ideas off the benches and into goods and services the people want to buy so we can create even more highly skilled—

1430

The Speaker: Order. Minister, time. Supplementary?

Mr Coburn: Minister, along with biotechnology, scientific developments are crucial to the advancement of medical research. Ottawa is a very important centre for this type of research. Minister, how is the government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. Order. I cannot hear the question. The member for Windsor West, please come to order. Supplementary.

Mr Coburn: Minister, how is the government ensuring that our leaders in research are able to continue and advance their crucial work?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'd like to thank the honourable member again. His area of the province indeed has a number of—some of our best and brightest researchers live in the Ottawa area. To support their research and to help us turn the brain drain into a brain gain in this province I was recently in Ottawa, at the University of Ottawa, to present \$4.6 million as the government's share of a multimillion-dollar project for the regional protein chemistry centre at the Loeb Health Research Institute.

I had the honour of meeting, for the second time, the Prime Minister's brother, Dr Michel Chrétien, who heads up that institute, who came from Quebec 18 months ago to help us with our brain drain problem. He's just absolutely delighted that he's been able to renovate the entire Loeb institute, if any of you have the opportunity to visit that centre, and to buy the new machinery that will ensure that his bright, young researchers are on the leading edge in creating that economic prosperity and jobs for this province. Also, \$2.6 million went to the medical—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time has expired.

HOSPITAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Health and it concerns the cost of hospital restructuring in my community of Pembroke.

Three years ago—and it wasn't quite three years ago—when your Health Services Restructuring Commission ordered the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital, it did so, it said, on the basis of a professional analysis which suggested that all hospital services in Pembroke could be consolidated at the remaining site for a total capital cost of \$5 million. Less than three years later, with the Civic Hospital closed, the estimated capital costs of renovating the remaining Pembroke General

Hospital are not \$5 million, they're not \$10 million, they're not \$15 million. At last report they are \$24 million.

The local cost of that rehabilitation or that renovation using your existing formula would be \$8 million that will have to be paid for by the people of Pembroke and area. What specific additional financial assistance are you prepared to offer the people of Pembroke and area so that they will not be crushed by this—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister of Health.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm certainly pleased to indicate that if I take a look a look at the funding that has been provided for Pembroke General Hospital, I see that there is new funding in the amount of approximately \$8 million. In fact, there has been the base allocation increase there of 1%. There's been money for the 60-hour stay. There's been Y2K funding, emergency room funding, extra money for nurses, restructuring reimbursement, transition funding, additional one-time funding. Certainly I think this indicates that we are continuing to increase the funding. If the member has an additional issue that he believes needs to be addressed, we'd certainly be willing to meet with him.

Mr Conway: I hope the entire House heard those numbers, because I live in a small Ontario city and our capital costs for hospital restructuring now stand at nearly five times what was projected just three years ago, meaning that our local share is not \$1.5 million but it's going to be \$8 million. That is going to crush my community of, if you take the surrounding area, approximately 30,000 people.

The Minister is right, there have been funds provided, but the fact remains that the capital costs are skyrocketing. So the supplementary is this: Since our local share is now at \$8 million, one and a half times what the entire project cost was estimated to be but three years ago, what additional financial assistance is the Minister of Health prepared to do to save my community from being crushed by this now extraordinary local share of what I repeat is now a five-times increase in the capital costs that were projected just three years ago?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are certainly prepared to do what other communities have asked us to do. We will work with you; we will take a look and review those figures, and obviously take a look at the needs. In instances, as you know, we have increased our own allocation for the restructuring of hospitals in this province. As we've indicated, we estimate it will cost approximately \$3.3 billion. The Ontario Hospital Association has estimated it's going to cost about \$3.2 billion. We have set that money aside, and we are prepared to work with your community.

TORONTO COUNCIL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Minister of Labour. The city of Toronto

outside workers recently ratified a new collective agreement, their first agreement with the newly amalgamated city of Toronto. I understand the city's inside workers are currently in negotiations.

I also read with interest your comments in the Toronto Sun on the weekend, where you offered support for reducing the size of council. You are quoted as saying, "I think 58 is too many."

What impact would this change have on the city's collective bargaining process, and will it affect the city's many hard-working employees?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much for the question. Obviously, any reduction in the number of members of council in the city of Toronto would have little, if any, impact on the decisions that have been taken by the previous council. There's going to have to be a negotiated settlement between the inside workers and the council itself.

My comments related to the fact that I simply think the city council today is too large. It would make more sense to me that the size of the council should be brought down some from 58. It makes more sense from a financial point of view, on cost to the taxpayers, but I also think it would make the council work more effectively and efficiently.

The impact on the unions would be nothing; the impact on the future unions wouldn't be anything other than negotiating with a smaller council. But the impact for the taxpayers would be significant. The savings would be significant, and I think council would work more efficiently and effectively, thereby operating with a little bit more thoughtfulness to the costs to the taxpayers of the city of Toronto.

Mr Newman: The hard-working people of my riding are always interested in seeing tax reductions and service efficiencies. Minister, you've served as a municipal councillor and you've served as an MPP. What more can be done to protect the residents in your riding of Etobicoke Centre, my riding of Scarborough Southwest and the other 20 ridings within the city of Toronto from the double-digit tax increases that the city has warned may be in the offing in the next few years?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I hear the barking and barracking with respect to the debt etc. The simple fact of the matter is there has been no provincial government that was prepared to go to the table and accept responsibility for the changes to the city of Toronto such as this provincial government. When it came to interest-free loans, this government ponied up the money for the city of Toronto. When it came to flat-out grants, this government ponied up the money for the city of Toronto. When it came to capital costs of the TTC, this government came forward and paid a significant portion of those capital costs. When it comes time for this government to show its commitment to the city of Toronto, it has consistently, unequivocally showed up with a commitment to protect the taxpayers. I don't think it's unreasonable that a

reduction in councillors would take place, considering the number they have in place now.

As I've said in the past, the only thing you're famous for across the floor is the commercial concentration tax, a blight on the city of Toronto. They've got a lot to thank us for. I'm not so sure about you.

1440

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question to the Deputy Premier again. Two days ago I indicated I'm going to introduce a private member's bill entitled the Toronto Waterfront Fair Housing Act. The reason I'm going to introduce it is because we have to have a legal mechanism, whether the Olympics take place or not, to ensure that any housing that is built along the Toronto waterfront includes not just the well-off but lower-income families, modest-income families and middle-income families. We know that if we leave this whole decision to market forces, the only housing that will be built will be upper-income housing.

What are you willing to do to ensure that the housing that is going to be built on the Toronto waterfront includes lower-, modest- and middle-income families, not just the well-off.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I noted your proposed solution to the affordable housing problem, especially with respect to Toronto's waterfront. I can assure you of one thing, that we won't be doing what your party did, and that is wasting the taxpayers' money on a boondoggle called non-profit housing.

During the watch of the government of which the honourable member was a member of the executive council, consultants were paid some \$300 million over 10 years—between the Peterson and the Rae governments—architects were paid \$550 million in fees, lawyers were paid \$50 million in fees, but we really didn't do a whole heck of a lot in helping the people who were supposed to be helped—

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): You really want to talk about consultants, Minister of Finance?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Deputy Premier, take your seat.

The member for Windsor West, this is your last warning please.

Supplementary.

Mr Hampton: I heard a lot of discussion there, but the reality is I didn't hear a thing about housing for lower-income families, modest-income families and middle-income families.

Your government has essentially killed rent control in this province. It has been driving rents up by 13% over the last two years in this city. You have no affordable housing strategy whatsoever, the federal government has no affordable housing strategy, and it means that tens of thousands of families are now either homeless or they're at risk of being homeless.

I'm asking. I'm giving you a suggestion about how you can ensure that housing that is to be built on the waterfront includes not just the well-off but lower-, modest- and middle-income families. If you don't like my suggestion, what is your suggestion? The private sector is saying they won't do it. They want to make money off it and there's no money in providing housing for lower-, modest- and middle-income families. What's your solution?

Hon Mr Eves: Here are some of the things the government has done: We've eliminated the first \$2,000 of PST on new rental unit development. We've created a new, lower tax class for property rental. We've committed to use public land to create a minimum of 500 units of affordable housing. We have placed limits on the scope of services for which municipalities can levy development charges. We have streamlined the planning and approval process in the province of Ontario and we have rationalized large sections of the Ontario building code. We are talking to our counterparts in Ottawa and our counterparts in Toronto to come up with a solution in which all three levels of government can participate. We are making some strides and effort in that direction.

The honourable member can argue that the results haven't been quick enough, they're not there, but I can tell you one thing we're not going to do is we're not going to do what the Toronto Star said in 1995, "Non-profit housing is a money tap opened in the name of the poor by the Liberal government in 1986 and cranked to a wide open gusher by the NDP"—

The Speaker: Order. The Deputy Premier's time has expired.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Minister of Health with respect to doctor shortages.

Earlier in this question period you referenced Dr Chan, the author of the ICES report, and let me tell you what Dr Chan had to say about your efforts as Minister of Health in the Windsor-Essex-Kent and Lambton areas. He said, "This report demonstrates with some pretty clear statistics the extensive problem in your region." He goes on to say that that problem has worsened under your government. He says that the problem has gone from 35 family physicians to 55 physicians.

Minister, as much as you might like to deny it, you are the government, you have been the minister, you have had the opportunity for some time to address a very serious problem in my community and in the communities of southwestern Ontario. What do you say to the tens of thousands of people in that region of this province who can't access a family doctor? What do you say to them when they call our offices looking for help?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member well knows, the report indicates and we have said that there is an issue of distribution. Unfortunately there are communities in this

province that do have shortages. In fact, this issue is one of very long standing and we are the very first government to address this long-standing issue.

We continue to put in place new initiatives. We have a community development officer program, we have an agreement for 20 northern communities, we continue to provide incentives, we have locum programs and Dr McKendry is further examining the whole issue of supply and distribution. We will continue to ensure that Windsor and other communities, as a result of the work being done by Dr McKendry—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time. Supplementary.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Minister, all your initiatives have failed. APP and the primary care pilot projects have failed. The doctor shortage in rural Ontario is worse than ever.

For the first time, southwestern Ontario has the most critical shortage in the province. You have had nearly five years to fix it. You have failed rural Ontario. The Chatham-Kent Health Alliance has told you that thousands of citizens have no access to the most basic health care services, but you don't listen. We have the highest heart and stroke incidence in Chatham-Kent and Essex and the worst doctor shortage.

When are you going to listen to the many experts who have given you solutions that will bring back quality health care to rural Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government actually has listened. In fact, we appointed Dr McKendry because there was a recognition that many reports had been circulated, and information had been gathered by many different people and associations. However, we had the courage to initiate a fact-finding commission. He will be bringing forward the exact scope and cause of the problem, and that will enable us, for the first time in the history of this province, to move forward and ensure that we have long-term strategies to address the entire issue of health professionals in the province.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): My question is for my honourable friend the Minister of Education. The young people of Ontario today are one of our greatest resources. The education reforms the government has recently implemented will provide students with greater advantages and better chances for success once they graduate.

However, some of my constituents are concerned that today's students also need practical, real-life experience to prepare them for future success. School provides sound fundamentals, but education shouldn't begin and end in the classroom, especially when there is so much to be gained through community activities.

Will the minister tell the House what the government is doing to ensure that students indeed get real-life work and volunteer experience during their tenure at school?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I thank the member for Waterloo-Wellington for the question. He certainly has gone out of his way to make sure I stay informed of the issues of education in his riding and his community.

He is quite right that it is very important for our high school students not only to get a better curriculum, better education, better knowledge and skills while they are at school—indeed the goal of our secondary school reform is to do this, with the improved curriculum that's starting in grade 9 this year and will be phased through the rest of the high school years—but also to get them out of the classroom to have experiences that might help contribute to their making better career choices and also give them the experience they may need to take those steps, whether it's to post-secondary or directly into the workplace.

One of the improvements is our mandatory community involvement process, where they have to spend at least 40 hours in the community. It promotes good citizenship. It helps others. They learn about career choices, and they also network for future employment.

1450

Mr Arnott: It is true that volunteerism makes our community strong, and I'm sure my constituents in Waterloo-Wellington would agree with this statement. They would also be very pleased that the government is helping to instill values in young people that promote a community spirit that I am sure will stay with our students after they graduate.

I am also very interested in what the government is doing to help high-school students enter the working world. Students will encounter a very fast-paced global economy when they graduate that is more innovative, rapidly changing and more challenging than ever.

My supplementary question to the minister is this: What is the government doing to prepare students for these challenges and opportunities?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Simply giving them the volunteer opportunities for community involvement is one step, but we need to do more to link them up with employment opportunities as they leave secondary school and go to post-secondary or wherever they might choose to go.

One of the ways we're doing that is an initiative called Passport to Prosperity, which was introduced by my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Dianne Cunningham, and myself in conjunction with a number of major employer groups, both private sector and public sector, for example, the YMCA, Bell Canada, the Durham District School Board, General Mills. What they are doing is recruiting employers in their community to help give students in high school more co-op opportunities, more job shadowing, more experiences that help them make more intelligent choices about the careers they want and also give them experience that will help them get jobs when they leave the education sector.

It's a very positive initiative, and we're very pleased with how well it's going. I'd like to thank all the

members in the employment community who are helping us do it.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, the member for Wentworth-Burlington, Toni Skarica, went out on a limb before the provincial election in June and made a bold promise to his constituents. He vowed that as long as he was MPP for the newly configured riding of Wentworth-Burlington, the Tories would not impose a megacity on Hamilton-Wentworth.

He said: "Those were my words, and I tend to stick by them. So my crisis is not so much to do with the super-city but with integrity and keeping your word."

"Skarica said he extracted a promise from his government not to impose a restructuring solution on the region because a local solution would ultimately be found. Mr Skarica said, 'I had to have the understanding before I agreed to run.'"

My question to the Deputy Premier is, who in your government gave that specific promise and commitment to the member for Wentworth-Burlington?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I know of no such commitment that was made to not only the member from Wentworth-Hamilton but any other member, for that regard. But you will quite understand and appreciate and know that the municipal restructuring process was reported back, with respect to those four municipalities and areas under consideration, to the government late last week. The government obviously will be taking the advice of the advisers into account and will be proceeding in due course.

Mr Colle: I hope, Deputy Premier, that you are not accusing your member of lying to the people of his community. I hope you're not doing that, because he says today himself, "The big principle here is, we pride ourselves, our government, that when we make a commitment we keep it. A promise made is a promise kept," said Mr Skarica today.

The promise here was not to do this, and so this is a broken promise. Again, the member for Wentworth-Burlington ran on that promise the a super-city would not be imposed. He repeated this promise to his voters over and over and over again. He said to them, "If you elect me, I have that commitment that it will never be imposed."

Again, are you accusing the member of lying to the people of Wentworth-Burlington during the election?

Hon Mr Eves: I might say at the outset that the honourable member seems to be (a) placing words in my mouth and (b) imputing motive to the honourable member for Wentworth-Burlington. He might want to re-think how he has phrased his question and the wording he's using in his question.

Having said that, I am not accusing the member for Wentworth-Burlington of anything. Every member in this Legislature speaks for his or her constituents, as the case

may be. They bring forward an opinion or a position as to what they believe is important with respect to their constituents. Certainly an issue such as municipal restructuring would be a very volatile issue in some areas with some people. Every member has their own opinions; every constituent has his or her own opinions. I am certainly not accusing the member for Wentworth-Burlington of anything. If the honourable member is, he might want to say so.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Chair of Management Board. Back in 1997 the National Survey Institute carried out a study in Canada on how Canadians viewed their customer service, particularly the customer service they received from government. It's unfortunate and disappointing to find out that only 40% of Canadians were satisfied with the quality of service that they received from government at that time.

Minister, can you tell us what our government has done to respond to the results of that study and what steps have been taken to improve customer service for Ontarians?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): To the member for Northumberland, it's a very important subject that he brings up. If I recall correctly, the study that he refers to mentioned, not unexpectedly, that the public expects the same high level of service from government as they receive from the private sector. They want timeliness in the responses; they want knowledgeable and competent staff; they want courtesy and fair treatment in getting what they need when they need it.

Our government has responded to these demands and made it a priority to put taxpayers' interests first. We've heard from the public that they want service when and where and how they need it. In fact, because of some of our improvements and initiatives of listening to the public, last year the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management awarded the Ontario government the gold medal for its approach to improving government service.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister. I certainly remember the conference that you're making reference to, when our government won the gold award, and at the same conference the federal government won a bronze. In fact, I worked very closely with the team that developed the recommendations for the improvement of customer service and my report, Ontario Delivers, was the impetus, in the presentation of it, that went into the winning of this award.

Minister, can you tell us how Ontario is implementing those recommendations in the report and in fact delivering better service for Ontarians?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I would like to mention for the members of the opposition and those who might be watching on TV and say thank you to the member for

Northumberland for his hard work and dedication to improving service to the Ontario public.

We've implemented a number of initiatives to provide flexibility and convenience; for example, self-serve electronic kiosks that provide fast and easier service for many government programs, such as getting licence plate stickers, paying fines, changing one's address, and even renewing an Outdoors Card; also Publications Ontario online, where you can order government publications seven days a week, 24 hours a day. There are also Ontario Business Connects terminals that allow you to instantaneously register an unincorporated business rather than having to fill out multiple forms. There are numerous examples of how we're beginning to improve government service.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, your government is denying opportunities to anyone who isn't among the richest of the rich. In fact, you've cut \$500 million from the university system and the university has transferred that burden to the student to pay.

My concern is a serious one. I tell you that what you have done is to change the qualifications for post-secondary education. It was once determined by ability of the student; now it's the income of parents.

Minister, in Ontario today, if you are rich, you are entitled to opportunity. Is that your vision of what you want to see happening in Ontario?

1500

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I think the member realizes that forever in this province governments have been committed to ensuring an accessible, high-quality post-secondary education experience for Ontario's students.

With regard to his concern about the cutting of funding, the budget for post-secondary education in this province this year is higher than ever before. In fact, next year it goes from a high of \$3.5 billion to a high of \$4 billion. With regard to accessibility, there is no government that has spent the kinds of dollars we have on helping people who need support to enter the post-secondary system. This year alone it's higher than of than any other government. I would suggest to the member that this is a very insincere message that he's putting forward.

Mr Marchese: Minister, Cathy Gaultier is a third-year Ryerson student, and already she has been forced to borrow \$24,000. That's the reality we're dealing with in terms of accessibility. Your most recent cuts to post-secondary education mean she can't finish her degrees. What you have done is burden her with an astronomical debt—but not just her; many other people like her. These are middle-class students we are talking about.

Minister, in your Ontario, if you're Cathy Gaultier or another modest- or middle-income family student, the

door to higher learning is slammed in your face. That's the reality Cathy Gaultier is subjected to and that's the reality many middle-class students are subjected to. Is that your vision of Ontario, Minister?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We are committed to ensuring that for every student who wants to go on to our post-secondary programs, we have an accessible, high-quality post-secondary education sector. The member should know that in the area of student assistance, this government has invested more money than any other government.

With respect to the individual, I would hope that she would get in touch with my office and perhaps we could talk about the financial challenges she faces.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I have the agreement of the three House leaders to introduce, by virtue of unanimous consent, a motion regarding the win of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Christopherson: I formally introduce this resolution that reads as follows:

I move that it be resolved that this House send a letter of congratulations to the Hamilton Tiger-Cats and the mayor of Hamilton in recognition of their stellar performance in bringing the Grey Cup home to Hamilton.

I introduce this on my own behalf but also on behalf of Dominic Agostino, the member for Hamilton East; Marie Bountrogianni from Hamilton Mountain; Toni Skarica from Wentworth-Burlington; and Brad Clark from Stoney Creek.

Let me be very brief and just say that in typical Hamilton style, the Ti-Cats showed their grit, their determination, their offensive policy and their defensive policy. They've made us in Hamilton and the surrounding communities very proud of that fantastic win over the Stampeders. Let me say that they played an honourable game and they should feel good about the fact that they played a game as well as they did. But we sure feel a whole lot better about the fact that we won and the Grey Cup indeed is coming back to Ontario, back to hometown Hamilton, and we're just busting at the seams with pride. Oskie Wee Wee.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I have the signatures of least another hundred concerned citizens and I'll add my own signature in full support of their concerns.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor"—and the carnage continues—"and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips."

This is signed by a number of constituents in my riding. I agree with this petition and I affix my signature to it.

WORKFARE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government plans to expand workfare, force more people off welfare yet they have not produced any quantitative evidence that the Ontario Works program is helping people to get jobs;

"Whereas the provincial government now threatens municipalities with reduced funding for their social assistance responsibilities if they do not comply with workfare regulations;

"Whereas we, the undersigned, oppose the regressive and deliberate policy of victimizing the poor, weakening working conditions for all workers through workfare by paying them less to do the same work and with fewer rights than paid workers and forcing them to accept short-term training that does not lead to decent-paying jobs;

Therefore, "We, the undersigned, commit ourselves and our organizations to educate, organize and activate around the issue of workfare through the creation of workfare-free zones across the province until we stop workfare;

Further, "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to rescind all Ontario Works legislation and that all Ontario Works programs be halted."

I support this petition and add my name to those of the petitioners.

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I just wanted to clarify from you whether all of the new petition rules are now in effect, if you could tell me when they were actually imposed.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Yes, they have been in effect for a little over a week now.

Mr Bradley: Would you be able to tell me precisely the date that was?

The Speaker: I don't remember the date, but it has been in effect. Petitions?

Mr Bradley: And what do you think of those rules?

The Speaker: Petitions?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, with respect to the member from St Catharines, I have the same concern that the overarching control of the petition process is somewhat limiting to members whose contributions may not otherwise be very remarkable.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On petitions as a point of order, if I may, Mr Speaker: I do think that you might wish to ask the government House leader to address the issue of problems that have been created for the, as well as for members. As you know, I have been presenting the same petition in this House from the first day the House came back. It's exactly the same petition. I have copies coming in literally on a daily basis. Theoretically, if I bring each one in each day, the

table has to review it and stamp it before it can be presented. It's the identical petition. Surely if the petition is unchanged, it doesn't need to take the time of the table.

The Speaker: You know I said we would be monitoring the situation. It actually has been working very well. I appreciate the support of all the members in keeping with our standing orders, and I thank the member as well. Petitions?

1510

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to add that I realize it could become a problem also. But for the short term it is solvable, because I have more petitions, and these were forwarded to me by Cathy Walker of the CAW on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of CAW members.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who die from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes, and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to these carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances in the workplace; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for an analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in

order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario, when Bill 14 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the order for third reading of the bill may then immediately be called. When the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding, "Deferred Votes"; and

That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

As we move forward on this legislation, I think it's very clear that there is urgency to deal with this legislation. I think that, as we've heard debate on both sides of the House relating to Bill 14, some things just never change. We continue still to hear from the opposition parties, both the Liberal as well as the NDP, that tax cuts are not important to the people of this province, that our government in the past should have done other things, that we should have focused on perhaps paying down the debt of the province, that we should have put more money into social services, that we should have put more money into education, that we should have done anything but make tax cuts a priority.

It's somewhat disappointing to continue to hear from members of this House, who should by now know better, because the facts are very clear—the actual impact in this province of the economic strategy that was introduced in this House by our government in 1995 of providing tax cuts to those who earn their paycheques through hard work, to those who invest in this province their own capital that they have earned and are willing to reinvest into the equity of this province. The opposition parties still don't get it. It was that very important stimulus to the economy that has in fact generated to date in excess of 600,000 new jobs, that has resulted in economic growth that among the G8 is unparalleled, that has put Ontario back in the driver's seat of prosperity.

For the first time in many years, there are young people who are graduating from university and college and they have the hope of a job. They have reason to believe that they, as young people in this province, will actually be able to take the training that they got in the college and the university and find a meaningful occupation, find a meaningful job where they can go out and create the same kind of hope and opportunity for themselves and their children as their fathers, their parents had done in the past.

I understand that there's partisanship involved here, and regardless of what our government comes forward with, there is going to be a reason to disagree or a reason or vote against it.

This is no longer a theoretical debate: Do tax cuts create jobs? With five years of history, five years of experience, we know that that in fact does happen.

The other very interesting predicament that the opposition parties have in our province is that to say that by creating tax cuts and allowing taxpayers to keep more of their own hard-earned money we're somehow robbing the provincial coffers of revenue is simply false, it's simply not true. The reality is that, as a result of the tax cuts, the jobs have been created and there actually is substantially more revenue to the provincial coffers by way of personal income taxes as well as corporate taxes. Perhaps that's a little bit too complex for some members opposite to grasp fully.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Pretty condescending over there.

Hon Mr Klees: But I think if the member for St Catharines will even speak to some of his own constituents who have experienced the last five years of tax cuts, who have experienced the fact that they actually take more money home at the end of a week than they did before—

Mr Bradley: And have no ophthalmologists to serve them.

Hon Mr Klees: —and even the ophthalmologists in St Catharines are grateful to this province, to this government for the tax breaks they're getting, because it's across the board. If you're earning \$20,000 in this province or \$200,000, this benefit of the tax cuts is benefiting everyone.

The member for St Catharines, I know, is having a really difficult time objecting to Bill 14. He's trying desperately to find some way to play the role of the opposition here, but I know that fundamentally he agrees, because in his heart and in his mind he knows that this is in fact in the best interests of the province of Ontario.

1520

Mr Bradley: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Surely the member for York-Mackenzie is not in a position—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: Whatever it is, York, Newmarket, in that area. Surely the member cannot put words in my mouth and say what I think and I don't think. Surely you would rule against that.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That is not a point of order.

Hon Mr Klees: Actually, Speaker, it's the riding of Oak Ridges—that's Richmond Hill, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Markham north of 16th Avenue—a wonderful riding representative of this great province of ours. In the riding of Oak Ridges we have everything from dairy farms and cash crops to high-tech industry. I can tell you and I tell members of this Legislature that it doesn't matter which sector I speak to, it doesn't matter where I travel in my riding, there is an appreciation for the

policies of our government that are returning our province to the values that made this province great: a reliance on the individual in this province, a recognition and appreciation for the work ethic. Even more important than that I think is a recognition that in this House, as we're all elected, we have a responsibility to do today what should have been done years ago and have the courage to make decisions that will ensure a strong foundation economically and socially for generations to come.

We're moving into a new millennium, and I'm convinced that one of the reasons for the great optimism of people across this province as we turn the century is that they know we will be going into the century with a balanced budget, with hope and opportunity for our young people, with a vision for greatness for all in this province regardless of which community we come from, regardless of our background. People have come to this province looking for hope and opportunity. As a result of the foundations that have been laid, people in this province have that. I look forward to our government continuing to implement strong, economically sound legislation and policy that will benefit us all.

Mr Bradley: I guess what is very perturbing is not that we have a bill of this kind before us, because the government is quite entitled to bring forward its legislation and I know that is what the government intends to do. I don't mind that part of it. What I object to, and I know my friend from Durham East—or whatever the new riding might be. In fact what is happening is the government is simply ignoring this Legislature or utilizing it in whatever way it sees fit, and it does so in a very smug fashion.

Unfortunately, now that there are fewer members in the government caucus, we have fewer people who have an axe to grind with the government, so more of them are compliant. There was a time when you could count upon at least some of the members, you may recall, Mr Speaker, offering an objection to the fact that the government moved forward with a bulldozer each and every time it had legislation that it wanted to rush through the House.

The chief government whip says that the opposition is trying to slow this down. In other words, we're trying to take something longer than two days to discuss a piece of legislation. What I would say to that individual, the former member for York-Mackenzie, is that we're in a situation in Ontario where this House might as well be shut down. We might as well simply say to the government, "Here, you just table all your bills and they'll just be passed, and we'll save all kinds of money."

Of course, that's what a lot of people—not a lot of people but some of the people on the other side believe that this House is virtually irrelevant, that the government should simply proceed with its legislation and the heck with everybody else.

I wish that I could be in a situation where I could dispute today some of the portions of this particular time

allocation motion, because it is really anti-democratic to see this happening.

I am hoping the Speaker will, for instance—because we're talking on a procedural matter now—not allow this government to shove through four amalgamations; that is, in four parts of this province. I hope they won't use that chair to be able to pass four pieces of legislation in one, that, as I see happening with this bill, in shoving something through the Legislature at a speed beyond which is healthy for democracy, the government wouldn't turn around and say: "Well, you know that amalgamation in Sudbury and the one in Hamilton, the one in Ottawa and in Haldimand-Norfolk? We're going to throw it all into one bill and members can speak for 10 minutes on that." I think that would be extremely wrong.

The government is going to have all of its arguments in favour of why this should be so. I hope we, for once, see a landmark ruling on the part of a Speaker that would in fact not dwell on precedents of the past. I know precedents have an important place in this House, but surely a Speaker who is progressive, who truly cared about democracy, would break new ground on this and not simply accept from the table the precedents which are presented. Keen as the people at the table are to provide them, clever as the people at the table are—and I have great admiration for them—it isn't necessary that the Speaker always accept and simply read out what the table says.

The last Speaker we had, Mr Stockwell, made some innovative rulings in this House. I want to give him his fair credit for doing so. There were rulings with which I disagreed, but I thought he made some innovative rulings. What we will need, it seems to me, if this House is to be relevant in the future, are more innovative rulings, not simply these time allocation motions over and over again.

If the government were really concerned about this bill, they would have brought the Legislature back in the summer even, or at least at the beginning of September. Instead, we have the government delay, delay, delay. Seven days they sat all year until they came back near the end of October. Now they want to shove all the legislation through with a minimum of debate when many people are going to be preoccupied at this time of year with matters other than what is going on in the Legislative Assembly, where they normally would be watching what is going on here.

I can tell you that the state of the economy in Ontario, despite—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: I also want to share some time. I didn't see a speaking list here this afternoon, and I saw only two of us in the House, so I want to make sure that my colleague from Prince Edward has that opportunity as well.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Only two of you?

Mr Bradley: But the state of Ontario's economy has nothing to do with your tax cuts. It has everything to do with the state of the American economy.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): We're lucky.

Mr Bradley: You are. The member says he's lucky. I've seen it when other governments have been in power as well, to be honest with you, that the state of the American economy has a major impact. It's even more so today because we do more trade—

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I really do have to rise. The member's comments about the tax cuts not having had anything to do with the economy of Ontario—I really do believe that he was much better off when I was putting words into his mouth earlier in the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): That's obviously not a point of order.

Mr Bradley: It's interesting to reveal what the government really believes to be true. The mythology which is presented by Guy Giorno, the person who gives—I hear now, I heard on Focus Ontario, that Guy Giorno gives permission for anybody to go on the show. You can't go on without Guy Giorno's permission.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I never asked for permission.

Mr Bradley: Well, that's why you got in trouble.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I didn't.

Mr Bradley: Oh, I heard all about it. I heard there was a lot of trouble because you didn't get Guy Giorno's permission to go on.

That's what I heard Robert Fisher say, and you will recall that Robert Fisher was the person who asked the Premier during the 1995 campaign, in May, "Is your health care policy going to result in any hospitals being closed in Ontario?" The Premier said—you'll recall this quote yourself—"Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you I will not close hospitals."

Hon Mrs Ecker: That's not what he said. Read the whole thing.

Mr Bradley: "It is not my plan to close hospitals." That's what he said. I'm glad the Minister of Education brought that to my attention. I will repeat it again, because it was not word for word. He said, "Certainly, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." And what happened? We've had over 40 hospitals forced to merge or close in this province as a result.

1530

What we're seeing now, as you move forward with more and more tax cuts—and nobody's going to reverse the ones that are there. Don't worry about that. People aren't going to reverse that. What is happening now, though, unfortunately for the Minister of Education, who I think would like to do a good job on education and would like to have the resources—I'm not a person here who says that she's an evil person who wants to destroy education. Some people say it; I don't say that. I think she would like to have the resources. Well, you can't have the resources if you continue to give away the revenue sources that you have.

So what is happening now is we're seeing an erosion of many public institutions and many public services. It is the agenda of the right wing, and I note for my friends on the government side that either today or tomorrow the Premier of this province will be speaking to that mainstream, Main Street organization, the Fraser Institute, which of course is as right as Guy Giorno, who runs this government. We will have a situation with the right wing now where they're endeavouring to destroy the confidence in public institutions so that people will accept radical changes they wouldn't normally accept.

An example is the health care system. If you do not fund the health care system adequately, what you will have is a situation where people will in desperation say, "Yes, I will pay out of my own pocket." There is another option. The other option is that the government not continue to give these tax cuts, but rather invest in the health care system.

I should never be tempted to respond to the Minister of Education because she wins when I respond, of course, but I must say to her, why on earth would any federal government of any stripe give this government money so you'll just give it away in a tax cut? If a federal government—Conservative, Liberal or NDP, or whatever party; Reform, like your government—if a party were in power there to give money to you—

Hon Mrs Ecker: We'd give it to health care.

Mr Bradley: You wouldn't; you would give it away in a tax cut. You've got the money, but you give it away in a tax cut.

Hon Mr Stockwell: So we're not entitled to our fair share?

Mr Bradley: What I say to my friend the Minister of Labour, who wants to engage in debate because he has to rely now on his own members to lob questions at him because the opposition, of course, find him far too formidable, I suppose, to direct questions to him, is that that would not be the case at all. I am saying that as long as you are engaging in yet another round of tax cuts, it seems to me people shouldn't be giving you money.

If you weren't, if you said, "Look, we're not going to engage in yet another round of tax cuts. If you give us further money, if you provide further funding," as I think we're justified in receiving, "we will devote it to health care and to post-secondary education"—but you're giving away the money in a tax cut. You get it and then you give it in a tax cut and you smile and take credit and you dump on the municipalities after that.

Some people have a short memory. They were municipal councillors at one time. I recall that well, and I know what you do to those municipalities. Then you come along again destroying what might be in existence. You now want to destroy local government, because now the mantra of this government is, "You must impose these huge regions." Of course, to the round of applause of the cranky Reformers, you say, "We're going to get rid of politicians," as though somehow that's going to save a lot of money. Well, it isn't going to save money. What you're going to do is lose that local input that you

need to have in government. You are taking away the access that people have to government. That is what you are doing with these policies, and you're now going to impose around this province, in three out of four places, regional government.

I'm with Tony Skarica on this, in Hamilton-Wentworth. I may have some disagreements with people in the NDP and Liberal caucuses, but I happen to believe—especially those people who ran on this, who ran in Stoney Creek and in Dundas and places like that and said, “Look, I'm against one big government.” If I were part of a government that imposed that, I would be resigning from the caucus and being an independent in the House, if that were imposed on a specific area that I represented and I had run in the election on that basis. So I'm with them. I'll tell you, I've got people over here as well as over there who would disagree with me on that. I do not think the solution is one big government.

The St Catharines Standard, a Conrad Black-owned newspaper—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: The member for Etobicoke North was waiting for me to mention Conrad Black—is leading the charge on this particular issue, and I can understand it. Big newspapers normally do that. The reason they do it is they can wipe out all the small newspapers and have one big newspaper. So they're happy; they can toss the employees out on the sidelines. They can, as they would say, rationalize, or as the member for Etobicoke North would say, “right-size.” But I can tell you that, as a result, there are a lot of people who will lose their jobs, and it isn't necessarily good for the region.

I represent the largest municipality in Niagara. One of the options is to make St Catharines bigger by gobbling up adjacent municipalities. I don't agree with that. I think that when you have that kind of local accountability, the local access to elected representatives, that's good.

The other thing that will happen when you have one big government: What they recommend in Sudbury—somebody can tell me; is it 14 members?—one government and 14 members of council. Do you know who's going to be able to get elected to that? The wealthiest people, the people who can run the wealthiest campaigns. Whereas in other areas, if you have local government, you find that when they are elected by ward, the councillors tend to represent a better cross-section. Do I agree with them sometimes? No, I don't. Sometimes I agree; sometimes I don't agree. But all you're going to get is people who have the financial backing or financial wealth themselves to run and get elected, because money does have, whether you like it or not, a big effect.

They're going to be out canvassing for donations and I'll tell you who will be lining up to donate. The developers will be there, first in line. They'll be fighting with a few others who want to influence local government. And I say this as a lament to whatever government happens to be in power—

Interjection.

Mr Bradley: —and I say this to my friend from Etobicoke North, who barracks over about other governments. Mine is not a point of partisanship; it's a point of principle. That's what's going to happen. So you don't have people on a local council who clearly represent a cross-section, as we have today, and it would be most unfortunate to have that happen.

We will likely see a bill attempted in this Legislature. I'll be calling upon the Speaker, a very progressive individual, a very enlightened individual, in the style of the last Speaker, to declare that bill out of order if indeed it is out of order, and I hope, as I say, that he doesn't rely entirely on some ancient precedent, but rather is innovative in the ruling that he makes, and understands that this House will mean nothing if you continue to allow these omnibus bills.

I'm not saying there's never an opportunity for an omnibus bill; there is. I'm not an impractical person. That is not one case where it should be. We may wish to vote in a different way on each one. The member for Stoney Creek may say, “Look, in Hamilton-Wentworth I would vote no.” Maybe in Sudbury he might vote yes. He's going to look and see what is best for each of these areas. But if it's only one bill, then quite obviously you're not going to be able to do that. That would be most unfortunate.

To go back to some of the provisions of this bill, what I see as a result of your constant mantra of tax cuts—and you've implemented some. You've received some credit for that. I'm not going to go back and fight that battle with you; that's something you've done. I may not have agreed with it at the time, but there it is. But you're getting into further tax cuts now and removing a lot of the resources that you would need, particularly—right now, you will continue to get revenue because the economy is good. But if the economy, as it inevitably does, starts to go down, you will find you're going to lose a lot of those revenues. You're going to be really strapped at a time when you need that base to be able to carry on government programs.

1540

I see too many government programs falling by the wayside. Should you examine them? Yes, certainly. For instance, look at the Red Tape Commission. I disagree with some of the things they've done; I agree with others. It's not unhealthy to look at programs. It's not unhealthy to look at projects. What is unhealthy is to continue to take from the government the resources it would have to intervene on behalf of ordinary folks in the province.

The wealthy will always do well by themselves. The powerful will do well for themselves. The people I worry about are the ordinary folks out there who don't have a lot of money or a lot of power to influence government, whatever government happens to be there or whatever level of government it happens to be. I think you're taking that away. I think you're really having an impact on the health care system.

I actually have a lot of empathy for the Minister of Health and for the Minister—

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): How about your federal cousins? They cut \$2.8 billion.

Mr Bradley: Well, I tell the member for Northumberland: If you're worried about the federal government, why don't you people run federally? Why don't you contest the next election? We are elected provincially to make decisions provincially. I'm saying that if I were given a preference to invest provincial funds in health care or give yet another tax cut—and I understand the difference between us—my choice would be to invest in the health care system.

I have watched the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and others trying to defend situations over which they have no personal control. Quite obviously, they must do that. They're part of the government, and they must do it. But surely they should be given the resources to carry out their responsibilities.

I know that the Fraser Institute gang and some of the whiz kids who advise the government think it's a good idea to destabilize and discredit the public sector, to discredit public institutions and to erode confidence in those institutions so the public will accept such things as a two-tier health care system. I don't know how many members of the government caucus agree with that. Who am I to say whether you agree or disagree? I don't know that. I suspect there are some people who think it's a good idea and others who don't think it's a good idea. But that's going to be the consequence.

I say to my friend from Kitchener: When you see the polling that takes place, when you have that number of people who in desperation will say, "Yes, I will reach into my own pocket to deal with health care," I can tell you that that means there's an erosion of confidence in the health care system. There simply isn't the necessary investment in it by whoever happens to be investing in it. There isn't that investment in it. I think that's important.

I know there may be some on the other side who bow down to America, in terms of that being the paradise we should all look forward to. But I can tell you that one thing that has been a positive difference between Canadians and Americans has been our attitude towards public education and public health care. I think that governments of three political stripes have maintained their adherence to that, or tried to, over the years. Only now do we see that starting to change, unfortunately. We're always going to quarrel over how much or where money is allocated, but one of the things I've been proud of as a Canadian is that a person doesn't go bankrupt because of a health care situation, or shouldn't have to go bankrupt to put their kids through post-secondary education, that we have a publicly funded education system. I was glad, the other day, to hear the minister talk about it in that context, a publicly funded education system. What's important about that is it provides equality of opportunity. We cannot provide equality of outcomes. I cannot see that happening. Governments can't produce the outcome, but we can provide equality of opportunity so that kids from all backgrounds have at least an opportunity to

get ahead, to make something of themselves and to make a significant contribution to society.

When we erode the public school system in any way, because that's the system to which everybody has access—there are other systems to which others have access, but that's the one to which everybody has access—then a real problem arises. It's not that I hate the people on the other side, or think you are malicious or anything of that nature. I just think you're wrong in taking away from those public institutions the resources they need.

We in Canada again have been different from the Americans in that way, and generally speaking we've looked upon public services in a different way from the US. Drive into some of those US cities and you see very wealthy people living in gated communities; that is, there is somebody at the gate, almost with a gun, preventing you from getting in. No one is allowed into the neighbourhood except through special access and permission. It's as though it's a castle with walls around it. We haven't seen that in Canada. We see a bit of movement toward it but not much. I think that's positive for Canada, and I think people of all goodwill, of all political parties, should avoid that at all costs.

America is a great place to live if you have money. There are a lot of things you can buy, including top-notch health care services, top-notch education and other services—policing services are done sometimes on a private basis. So it certainly is a great place to live if you have money. But look at the disparity between the very rich and the very poor. Drive through one neighbourhood where the people are just destitute and then through another where the wealth is almost obscene.

Yes, in parts of Canada we have areas of which we shouldn't be justifiably proud, where people are forced to live in squalor and great difficulty. But it's not the way it is in the US. It's not nearly to the same degree, and we do have a social safety net that is extremely helpful to us in this country. I want you to know that I say the same to the federal government, that they should not be engaging in huge tax cuts. They're itching, they're being pushed by the National Post and CFTO and others and, unfortunately, I think you will see it happen.

I happen to believe—yes, there are certain circumstances. I remember the member for what used to be Scarborough-Ellesmere brought forward a proposal for a particular tax cut in a specific area, which I thought was reasonable. It was going to be extremely productive, and you would see a direct effect. There's nothing wrong with that. There are areas where you can use the taxation system for purposes of influencing the economy in a positive way—I think that's good. With an income tax cut, you cannot assure where it's going to go. With people at the bottom of the ladder, it's likely that it will go directly into the economy. But with people at the upper echelon, very often it will go to imported goods or to a holiday somewhere else. It's not going to be directly productive to the economy.

It may or may not be, but there's no guarantee of that. Even conservative economists were flabbergasted when this government decided to proceed with tax cuts while running a huge deficit. Was the deficit all your fault? No, it wasn't all your fault by any means. I think you could have addressed the deficit problem in a faster fashion if you hadn't given up that tax revenue as the Canadian Bond Rating Service said.

So I say, not just to you, but to your federal brother, the federal government, that they should not be wildly heading into tax cuts and removing revenues. Instead they should be reinvesting on behalf of the people of this country, in efficient services and in positive services for people. Wasting money? No, I disagree with wasting money. And that's where there's an honest difference as to what is an essential service and what is not. I understand that. But I watch the federal government and this government both looking at further tax cuts, and there may be room for some at the federal level, for instance, and specific instances to stimulate certain areas.

The minister of science and other things is here today, and I'm sure he's very concerned about such things as research and development. There can be mechanisms a government can use to help out, in terms of research and development. I want to say to some government members as well that you have made some tax cuts for small business that I think were positive. I'll say that in the House today; I think that's true.

What I'm concerned about is that you're going to erode that revenue base to such an extent that you will have to rely heavily on user fees, which prey hardest on those who are least able to pay, or you're going to get further into gambling revenues. You're just going to open the gates to further gambling.

I know that some members on the government benches have a conscience about that and have a very uneasy feeling about the constant expansion of gambling.

1550

There are some other members in the Liberal caucus who may wish to speak on this matter, so I shouldn't take all of the time, and won't. But I just want to say in my final remarks how concerned I am to see the constant changes to this House which make it less relevant every day.

I sat in a cabinet on the government side. Our members who weren't in cabinet and who hadn't served on this side of the House, the opposition side, used to think the opposition was obstreperous—is that a word? I think it is, yes, something like that, close to it; I have a hard time with my pronunciation—that it was a very juvenile exercise on the part of the opposition, that they were irresponsible and so on. I used to say to them that while they may dislike what the opposition is engaging in to slow down the government or try to persuade the government, that's an important role in democracy and that, yes, we have to take a little longer to do things. “Yes, we have to have more debate, more discussion, more input, and it will annoy you to do so, perhaps,” I'd

say to my colleagues when we were on the government side, “but it's essential in democracy.”

Every day I see something. Mr O'Toole and I were talking today about some bureaucracy arising around petitions and so on. I understand; I was as guilty as any of petitions which weren't as clear, concise and legitimate as they might be. Should that end? Yes. But I don't know if we go too far the other way, I think most members would agree, with trying to address that problem with other changes.

Anyway, I did promise. As I looked around, some of my colleagues said they might be interested in engaging in this debate, so I will conclude my remarks now and I guess it'll be passed on to the NDP or something.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to talk about the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act. What a novel idea: tax cuts. Even though apparently we had a deficit, the Premier decided that tax cuts make a lot of sense for Ontarians. It was a novel idea because, how can you decrease the government's income coming in? But it did work in the sense that, just exactly like the Premier had said, the lowering of the taxes puts more money into average Ontarians' pockets, whereby they can go out and they can decide what's best for them, they can go out and decide what they should be buying.

People have decided to buy bigger-ticket items now. Even the people who used to work, even in 1994 and 1995, if they had jobs, had no confidence in the economy. They were not out there buying bigger-ticket items; they were just living from day to day. Now, because of these tax cuts, because of the better economy that these tax cuts have fuelled, people are out there.

Even in my own riding, Springdale, the housing market is booming. People are lined up to buy affordable housing, and beautiful houses are coming up. It's great. Because of the tax cuts in the last four years, 615,000 new jobs have been created. People have been coming in from other parts of the country; people have been coming in from other parts of the world. Five years ago, new immigrants coming into this country, coming into this province of ours, which is a great province, as I've seen, were wondering whether they'd made the right decision, whether they were in the right place. But since then we have implemented 69 tax cuts in the last four years, and now we're proposing to cut taxes 30 more times, a total of 99 tax cuts. So we've created 615,000 more jobs. More than 400,000 people have gotten off welfare and found themselves productive jobs.

As I said, people were questioning whether they'd made the right decision. I've met many constituents, and they have told me they're very happy. When I went door to door during the last election, before June 3, the people were so amazed they said: “Raminder, we're very happy to see you. We like your program.” Even though the other platforms—the 20/20 Liberal platform, the NDP platform—seemed to say some glowing things, people told me they do not believe in any of those, even though there are some glowing things about the economy and

taxes. They said, "In your platform previously, the Common Sense Revolution, you guys did exactly what you said you were going to do, and there's a credibility in this document and we want to bring back the same government again." We're very happy that we have been given that chance.

We want to assure the people, not only in my riding but in the whole of Ontario, that these tax cuts, which have created 615,000 more jobs, have actually brought the lowest unemployment rate in the history of Ontario, certainly for the last 10, 15 years. We want to continue that by reducing more taxes, and we will be creating 825,000 more jobs. That's the commitment. The people of Ontario have believed in our commitment, and we intend to stick by it.

At the same time, the tax cuts and increased jobs have no doubt created some problems, and I'll mention some of the problems they've created. It's a good problem. Many of the business people in my riding have come to me and they've complained, saying, "We can't get enough workers." There's a major problem. That kind of a problem we don't mind hearing about, because in essence these 615,000 jobs are high-tech jobs, they are good jobs. At the same time, we can't get enough people. So that's a good kind of problem that we hear about.

Over the summer, I also met many parliamentarians from different parts of the world. When I explained to them that this government had decided to cut the size of the government from 130 members to 103, they just could not believe that. They were amazed. How can a government cut back its own size? They were flabbergasted.

There are 59 government members; at the same time, there are 58 councillors in the city of Toronto. There are 59 members running the government of Ontario; there are 58 councillors running the city of Toronto. What a disparity. That's why we're recommending that the size of every level of government should be reduced. That we can do by putting more money into people's pockets, by making governments more efficient.

As you know, I said the confidence has come back in people's minds. They're out there spending money. Many people are shopping out there, you can't get parking spaces in the shopping malls, because the economy is booming. People are upgrading their houses, people are buying cars, they're repairing their cars. It's great. People have told us to continue on this great road of recovery. They're very happy in terms of the steps we are taking.

As you will recall, we have also eliminated the employer health tax, the EHT. To any corporation whose payroll is less than \$400,000, we have said, "You don't need to pay the employer health tax." That covers 88% of Ontario's private sector employers. They're very happy because now they can create more jobs and more and more people can benefit.

In fact, an average family, a typical two-income family earning \$60,000 a year, will be saving \$1,385. They'll be better off each year. That money they can go and spend as they like. They can spend this money much

better than governments can spend it. So that is what we are proposing. We want to ensure that there are tax cuts and we want to continue to 99 times. We've already cut 69 times; we'll be cutting 30 times more.

1600

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very happy to speak today to Bill 14, which is the budget bill. After some of the rhetoric that we've heard in the House this afternoon, we really have to set the record straight in terms of Ontario's economy and certainly the nation's economy. If you live in my riding, if you live anywhere in Essex county, in southwestern Ontario, you do not need to be a rocket scientist—I know the pages are going to agree with me on this—to know that where we come from, cars drive the economy.

There's one good reason why the Big Three are doing exceptionally well. That's because Americans are buying our cars. If you want to look at the Ontario economy and break down all those indicators, there is only one indicator that shows an increase for the Ontario economy. Do you know what that one indicator is? It's the trade figures for Ontario. The fine gentleman who just spoke last probably didn't look at the specifics of that; he just takes those bullet points the party hands over to him and reads them by rote. Let me tell you that the only reason the economy is booming is trade. To that end, if this were a government that is truly interested in improving the economy of Ontario, they would say that trade is where it's at, and it is, because they are buying Ontario cars, some of the finest of which are built in Windsor, Ontario. Issues like infrastructure and roads, trade corridors in Ontario—those are the kinds of priorities we want to hear from a Conservative Party so keenly interested in the economy, so they say. You have done nothing where infrastructure is concerned.

Where we have tried to advance the debate on trade corridors for Ontario, whether you are in Sarnia-Lambton or Windsor, Ontario—we have the greatest gateway to the nation in those two communities, and especially the largest single access to Canada and to the US goes right through my riding at the Ambassador Bridge and the Windsor-Detroit tunnel. This government has done absolutely nothing for the improvement of infrastructure. There we are as a city, as a community, with our own property tax base having to support the infrastructure.

For those who come from Windsor West, you'll know that when you go through the Tim Hortons and you're right on the corner of—pick any of the ones that cross Huron line. If you try to cross Huron line, which is the major access corridor to the 401 coming through Detroit at the Ambassador Bridge, your car actually moves up and down through the ruts of the road, because there's such traffic by trucks that are so heavy that they are causing damage to our roads, far before it ever should. What did the government do when they were first elected in 1995? They cut those transfer payments to support our road system. The one economic indicator that is improving for Ontario is trade, and this government chooses, in

its wisdom, to cut support for something as necessary as proper roads. That is totally unacceptable.

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it's important that the people of Ontario know that this government has spent more on the roads in this province than any other government—

The Acting Speaker: This is not a point of order.

Mrs Papatello: This member ought to know better, as a member of cabinet, than to waste my time in this House.

The key today for Ontario's future, and why it is doing better as an economy, is trade. There is no question; every single economist worth his salt agrees with that stance. This government has done nothing to address that or improve that. It is happening despite this government. That's the point I want to make. Economic improvements in Ontario happened despite the Conservatives and Mike Harris. That's because Americans are buying our cars. Therefore, the manufacturing industry can support the auto industry.

We want to talk about what the priorities ought to be for a government that should want to improve the Ontario economy. Did you know—let me tell you—that the Big Three companies that manage the production of cars spend more money on health care for their employees than they spend on steel to produce those cars? That is how critical an element like health care is as a benefit package for the employees of the Big Three. Can the same be said for the Ontario government, which has responsibility for providing health care for the people of Ontario? What do we have instead? We have the community of Windsor, the canary in the coal mine it always was where restructuring was concerned. What has this government done but failed the people of Windsor, failed the people of Windsor West when we lost both emergency rooms before any investments were made in our community? Those people who have been to my riding know that full well, that that is bang on. That is exactly what your Tories told you, the few that you could find in my riding.

Nothing has changed so far. The only thing that's happened between last term and now is that the Provincial Auditor came out with a statement, and I don't hear any of the Conservative members talking about the Provincial Auditor's statement. What did he say? He said that your restructuring process was a disaster, that it was complete chaos, that you have not found savings you were supposed to find, that your government cannot even remit the monies you're supposed to remit at the appropriate time for it to have an impact. You choose at every turn to make it political.

This Minister of Health fails to deliver emergency care money, which causes a political benefit to the Premier's office—thank you, Elizabeth. He goes on a world tour to deliver cheques the size of three feet by two feet: "Here's your emergency money." He goes down to University Hospital, and while he's in the lobby of the emergency room with his cheque, they've decided to roll the patients from the gurneys, hide them in the closet while the

Premier's in town so that he can't see what kind of crisis is happening in the emergency rooms at University Hospital. Do you know why we know this? Because Windsorites go to that hospital because it's a regional centre. We have lots of information about what's really happening, even in what we in Windsor call the mecca of health care, and that is London, two hours up the 401.

We want to talk about a budget bill. We want to talk about what the priorities of this government are. They're wrong. They're dead wrong. Even an economic bill like a budget bill you can't get right. You have selected, in your wisdom, to make changes through Bill 14 to give the Ontario Realty Corp more power, because they're doing such a good job already, as the press is telling you on a daily basis. We have umpteen examples now where the Ontario Realty Corp finds itself in the courts trying to defend itself against all of these cases because they are doing things that are inappropriate in the releasing of assets that we own as taxpayers. We own property. Now we choose that we're going to sell the property for a one-time benefit to your books, and the Provincial Auditor called you on that. They said, "This shell game with your books—assets in, assets out, revenue one-time"—it is just bizarre to think that you would continue on this bent that you somehow are good for the economy. You have made a hundred mistakes, a thousand mistakes, in how you've dealt with the management of the economy.

All I can tell you is that when you live in Windsor, you get a view of what really drives the economy. You should be investing in things like infrastructure, roads, the appointment of trade corridors so that it actually makes a difference in where people will invest and why. You should have your priorities on health care and do it right, instead of just doing what's for show and what's for political purpose so that when your ministers of health fail—as they have, both of them so far—your Premier can take political advantage and traipse it around the world.

Frankly, the Provincial Auditor is on to you, and that's the only good vindication that we've had in the last few months. Everything that we have said for the last four years has been proven to be true through the Provincial Auditor.

Mr Galt: I'm a little surprised to be on my feet quite so quickly here.

It was interesting to hear the member for Windsor West. It's unfortunate that she can't stay with us for a few minutes, but her newspaper, the Toronto Star, the Liberal Star, made a comment on November 10, front page of the Liberal Star, and I quote: "Growth Powered by Ontario will Outstrip the United States."

1610

How could we be riding on the coattails of something else when we're leading? This is what the member for Windsor West was suggesting, that the only reason for the economy in Ontario is because of the US economy. The US economy was doing very well back in the early 1990s, and what was happening here? Well, not very much. It was going downhill with heavy taxes, red tape

galore. Meanwhile, it was doing very well out in BC. But then what happened in BC as we moved through the 1990s? More taxes, more red tape. Where are they today? They claim it's the Asian flu. I can tell the member for Windsor West that it certainly wasn't the Asian flu. It was right inside of the people. If the NDP in BC had looked in the mirror, they would have known why they got into trouble, why people were leaving in droves to go to Alberta, where things were happening. It was because of the policies of that government.

That's why this province was in trouble back in the early 1990s: because of the policies of the Liberal government from 1985 to 1990. They just took off with phenomenal quantities of spending into the early 1990s. Between the federal Liberals and the provincial NDP, it's no wonder we ended up in the position that we did.

There is no question that there are a lot of lessons to be learned, especially if you look at some of the fiscal chaos that was going on that ended up defeating the Rae government back in 1995. If nothing else, we should learn a lesson from what was going on at that time. Milton Friedman said it best: "There is indeed no free lunch."

Sooner or later, it catches up to you. In reality, you eventually pay for what you get. Deficits obviously turn into debts, and debts are really nothing more than deferred taxes that have to be financed sooner or later through ever-rising, ever-increasing interest payments, and here we are in Ontario paying interest up to almost \$10 billion, approximately half of our health care, almost equal to the cost of education. Just imagine, if that debt hadn't been allowed to get away, what we could be doing with that \$9 billion to \$10 billion that really should be going for services and not going into servicing the debt.

In years gone by, it has been politicians of this country and of this province who have really done a tremendous disservice to us. What were they doing to get re-elected? They were making all kinds of promises—"No down payment, no payment for a year"—and ending up with very irresponsible spending programs, and then the debt and the deficit occurred.

A tax is much like a disease. I often think of it as something like a parasite. At a reasonable level, the host can survive and live in a symbiotic relationship, but if you go on and overtax, it ends up that the host dies. In this case, the province would go into bankruptcy or the federal government would go into bankruptcy. It's certainly a sad fact that high taxes, needed to finance lavish government spending habits, became a near-fatal disease afflicting all parts of our country, and particularly our economy.

Somebody had to break the fever, somebody had to prescribe a cure for this country, and it's great to see that a few of the premiers in this great country have come through with a cure. A Premier like Klein in Alberta and a Premier like Harris here in Ontario have led the way to lowering taxes and reducing government spending.

It wasn't a problem of not having enough revenue coming into the province or into the federal government.

The problem has been excess spending. A lot of that spending is related to politicians wanting to get re-elected. I can understand why they want to get re-elected, but not on the backs of hard-working Ontarians here in this province.

As a result of these tax cuts Ontario now has the lowest general provincial income tax rate in the country and the second-lowest top marginal rate in Canada, just behind that of Alberta.

Not only that, we set a new course for lower taxes in this country. Even now, today, the federal government is talking about tax cuts. Unfortunately, that's all they're doing: talking. They've been talking now for a couple of years about tax cuts. They recognize the importance. Certainly the Minister of Finance desperately wants to get on with tax cuts, but the money-hungry federal Liberal government just won't let him go ahead. Unfortunately, other than for a few scraps and some well-chewed bones, the action behind Ottawa's words is sadly lacking.

We'd even be happy in the province of Ontario if the federal government would stop the tax increase. It's just terrible the kinds of increases that have gone on over the last few years. It has been kind of hidden, and it has been difficult to see. Particularly when the province has been cutting taxes so much, they just slip in their tax increase and the rank-and-file Joe and Jane Worker don't notice a difference on their paycheque because the province has been cutting taxes. If they were honest about it, before they start talking about tax cuts, let's see them at least put an end to those tax increases I've been commenting on.

Mostly, unbeknownst to most Canadians, federal taxes have been rising, and rising sharply, for years. For those who don't think further tax cuts outlined in this bill before the House are necessary, let's just look for a few minutes at some of the federal numbers. Take, for example, the transfers. They refer to them as transfers from the private sector to the government when in fact they're just another tax. From 1989 to 1996, there have been increases in all taxes. The federal taxes, provincial taxes, CPP premiums and employment insurance deductions went from 21.5% of the gross domestic product in Canada to 24.5%. Over seven years, that was a 14% increase. That means that in seven short years the government's take in relation to the economy grew by a choking 14%—just absolutely terrible.

After Revenue Canada's ravenous back-alley shake-down of taxpayers, no wonder the income of Canadian families has been dropping for years and no wonder we see so much anger on the streets, Canadians upset over having less take-home pay. It's pleasant to see so many in Ontario in the last year or two, when you see them on the street they're smiling and happy. Why are they smiling and happy? Because they can go out and buy the goods that the member for Windsor West was talking about, goods coming across the bridge on those trucks, goods that are produced in Ontario, which they're now able to buy.

My good friend Rami mentioned the difficulty finding a place to park in a shopping mall. I have to go around and apologize to my Liberal friends back home every Christmas over the last year or two because of the traffic jams around the shopping malls. The shopping mall parking lot is full. They have to park out on the street and walk to the mall. It's very unfortunate. I know we could raise taxes like the Liberals and put people out of work and then there would be all kinds of parking spaces at the shopping malls. Certainly back in the early 1990s we saw lots of space at the shopping malls for you to park your car and go in and shop. There were bargains as well, because an awful lot of the shopkeepers were going bankrupt at that time. In fact, after-tax disposable income dropped 8.4% during those seven years, just a shameful state of affairs.

Those historical high levels of taxation made tax cuts in Ontario absolutely imperative, and this party recognized it when they were campaigning some six years ago. Not only did we know it, but the taxpayers knew it and the economy knew it. But look how long it takes for the feds to get the message. I'm still not sure that they really have got that message yet.

Governments cannot impose impossibly high taxes without seeing some of the devastating effects that occur as a result. Canadians cannot go on spending money they don't have. You can't expect them to be saving money that has been taxed away from them. They just don't have it in their pocket or in their wallet. They certainly won't reinvest or invest in new businesses with money that is now the property of Revenue Canada.

None of this should be surprising, although just listening to the member from Windsor West talking, we should spend all kinds of money, raise the taxes and it will just keep flowing in. She does not understand what the repercussions are of high taxes. They're devastating to the economy, and there is all kinds of evidence of this over the years.

1620

We recognize these truths. We recognize that Ontario consumers simply cannot absorb any more provincial tax hikes. We were elected and we were re-elected to bring at least the provincial portion under control and we're well on the right track to doing exactly that. It's just unfortunate that the feds won't give support. If we could just get that kind of support from Jean Chrétien and his merry band of tax-and-spenders in Ottawa, we could go so far with this country. Ontario alone is leading the G7 countries throughout the world. If we could just get the rest of Canada with us, all of Canada could be leading the G7 countries.

We hear of promises of tax cuts on the one hand, and on the other hand new tax burdens are planned for the decade ahead. Why do they talk one way and act another way? On the one hand the feds will cut the employment insurance premiums by a minuscule amount, and then they'll impose a doubling of the CPP premiums, one of the biggest tax grabs in the history of this country. Just imagine the increase that's going to happen with the

CPP. It's just devastating to employers; devastating to employees. It's just not fair to the people of Ontario.

It's tremendous what the people of Ontario contribute, billions and billions of dollars every year to the employment fund, but we reap back such a small fraction in this province. In grand total, something like \$15 billion a year flows from this province to the other provinces here in Canada. Is that fair? Is that just? Yes it is, if you are a federal Liberal snorkelling around in the trough down there in Ottawa. What's even more ironic is that our tax cuts are stimulating the economic growth across this country. Ontario's sizzling economy, and I don't know how you could stress the booming economy any more, is largely responsible for the federal government's coming up with a surplus.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Even Martin said that.

Mr Galt: Martin has even admitted to it. The federal Minister of Finance is recognizing what's going on in Ontario.

There are two basic reasons why the federal government has managed to balance their books and come up with a surplus, and both really are on the backs of Ontarians, on the backs of Canadians. They reduced massively the transfer payments: over \$3 billion just in social services and health care to Ontario and to the other provinces. Meanwhile, we were increasing our spending for health care by a little over \$3 billion, actually, during that period of time.

The other area has been the fact that the economy in Ontario is booming. They haven't changed their tax structure, so the dollars are just pouring in and they gleefully waltz off to the bank, calling it their money. Let me tell you, taxes are not their money, it's not our money in Ontario; it's the taxpayers' money. We should never, ever forget whom that money really belongs to. We should give it back, give that money back to the people who earned it. It's the only honourable thing to do.

I just want to take a couple of minutes more to talk a little bit about the platform we ran on back in 1995. As I think back, I'm so impressed with what was designed and the predictions that were put in place.

In the fall of 1993, winter of 1993-94, that platform was designed and written predicting things like the creation in this province of 725,000 net new jobs in the first five years after the election. They had no idea when the Premier of the day might call the election, whether he'd drag it out or snap an election early, so they weren't basing it on any particular time frame. Here we are, a little over four years into the mandate, and look how many jobs have been created: 610,000 net new jobs since the election; 615,000 since the throne speech.

What happened between the election and the throne speech? I'll tell you. We were trying desperately to turn the Queen Mary around in the Toronto harbour without hitting something. That was the circumstance we were in. The economy was plummeting so fast that even with the election, the public didn't believe we were going to do what we said we were going to do and we lost 5,000 jobs

during that summer. That's why the difference between 610,000 from the time of the election and 615,000 from the time of the throne speech, and here we are—this is the impressive part—on track for the 725,000 net new jobs that we were committed to.

I was just a foot soldier, working away, doing my thing, selling the program. I don't begin to take the credit for that design. I'm impressed that the economists who worked with our Premier, worked with the leader of the PC party of the day, and came up with those figures and they were so accurate. I'm flabbergasted to see the accuracy and how it's working out.

The economy is on track. Actually, it's doing better than we had expected. The balancing of the budget is coming exactly when we predicted, in five years. I guess I am bragging a bit about the fact that it's ending up there, but what's exciting is that somebody could predict this. Six years ago, what was going to happen could be predicted, regardless of what the federal government was doing, what the US was doing or what BC was doing, and we're on track. My hat's off to those people who were designing it at the time.

This "riding on the US coattails" was mentioned, and I explained to the member in my beginning comments that you can't ride on the coattail of somebody else when you're actually leading. The Toronto Star sometimes is right and it was certainly right this time: "Growth Powered by Ontario Will Outstrip the United States," November 10, 1999, the front page of the Liberal Toronto Star. If any of the Liberals want to have a look at it—they believe in that paper—I think they would be very enthused.

It's just been because of that stimulation of the economy, the increase in revenue, some \$6 billion a year more coming in is the reason that we were able to raise the budget from \$17.4 billion to well over \$20.6 billion for health care, in spite of the fact that the federal government cut back \$2.8 billion in their transfer payments. It's the economic stimulation and the extra taxes coming in that has given us that opportunity to be able to do it.

I'm indeed very pleased to be able to support this bill, Bill 14. It's a tremendous bill, the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999. I'm certainly looking forward to its being passed; I trust it will. Despite all that we've been doing, Ontarians are still suffering from tax fatigue. We must continue to do what we can to reduce the oppressive burdens so callously laid on by previous governments.

In winding up, I plead that it's time for the federal government to do the same as the province of Ontario is doing, to really stimulate the economy, and we can take off for all of Canada to lead the G7 countries.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Here in the Legislature we live in kind of an artificial world. We're in a nice, dry environment; we have lights; and, goodness knows, we have hot-air heating in here. But I think we need to remember, as politicians, how the rest of the world lives. I walk down Yonge Street, and I

haven't done that often over the years, but I can recall 10 and 15 years ago walking down Yonge Street and I didn't see people sleeping on the grates and I didn't see people begging for money.

It's easy to focus on the word "budget" and that's all we talk about. Maybe these people on the sidewalks of Yonge Street are lazy bums who won't work, but maybe they're not. If someone's blind, it's very easy to get compassion for them. If someone's deaf, we can understand that. But if someone has another, hidden sort of disability, we tend to very quickly label them as lazy. But these are people who in the past we felt, as a community, we had to provide for and had to offer services, and now we don't.

We can lose touch with them, and it's easy to lose touch, I guess, if you're a cabinet minister and you're riding to the Legislature and back in a limo. But I don't think it would be a really bad idea for every person in this Legislature if, two or three or four days a month, we knocked on doors like we did during the campaign; if we actually knocked and asked what the issues are—not once every four years, not for four weeks every four years, but on a regular basis. Because if we do that on a regular basis, we will be reminded of the proliferation of poverty that's happening in Ontario.

1630

And the income tax cuts, they're great if you have income, but not everyone has income. The income tax cuts have been a much greater advantage for some than for others. It's easy to hide the low-income people—let's not worry about them; let's not think about them—but they're there, and we need to listen and think about them.

It is all too easy for a government—and it's not just this government; most governments have governed with polls—to determine who will support their party and who won't and then just ignore the ones who traditionally don't vote for you. The unfortunate reality here in North America, and perhaps in the world, is a lot of poor people don't vote. A lot of people are completely disenchanting with the government, all governments, all politicians and don't vote. They lose the opportunity to help shape the province in the vision that they may have, because not all wisdom is consecrated within this room. But instead of actually finding out why they don't vote, we simply ignore them and say: "let's concentrate on the numbers, let's look at the demographics, let's take all the research and let's do what we have to do to get those people out to the polling booths. The others aren't going to show up, so we don't have to serve them."

We've seen money saved in the last election campaign by not doing a census, by not compiling a voters' list and ending up with a voters' list that was disgraceful, knowing that the people who are well educated and the people who have cars would be able to go through the process of getting their names on the voting list, but for people without cars, it was a very complicated process, and they actually didn't make it to the polling booth that day, because their names weren't there.

The simple fact is democracy costs money, and we've seen a reduction in the money going into making our elections open to everyone. Sure, maybe these aren't the people who were going to support the governing party. These are the people who traditionally maybe haven't supported the governing party. But, by gosh, they're entitled to a vote and we should have done everything in our power in Ontario to make sure they had access to that vote.

The numbers across the province who actually voted were a sad comment on the government. If some of the money that had gone into the ads for education, if some of the money that had gone into the ads for health—which the auditor, by the way, said were clearly partisan; we've seen no acknowledgement of that, but the auditor, a nice, neutral individual who brought the wrong message for the government, said that the ads were partisan—what would that money have done to make people aware of how they had to vote?

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: Pretty minuscule compared to the amount that went into the partisan ads.

Interjection.

Mr Parsons: I'm sorry. For a second I interrupted your heckling. That won't happen again. I'm new and I'm learning. I keep expecting rationale, and then I realize what's going on.

There is a reason for the democracy and for the processes that we have in Ontario. We've entered into dismantling everything, and everything comes down to a dollar. Goodness knows, dollars are the oil that makes the machinery work. I understand that. Education, health, everything is tied to the dollar. But the dollar has to be balanced with some compassion. The dollar has to be balanced with the future, looking at what the impact of that cut will be.

Some of the things that were done in the past, even though they were done by Bill Davis and even though they were done by John Robarts, maybe they were right, maybe there isn't a need to dismantle the work done by those previous premiers. Maybe they were correct at that time and we could continue with it, instead of, "We're going to change everything and then see how it works, and if you criticize us you're wrong, and if you stand in our way we're going to get rid of you."

We need to come back and refocus on the people of Ontario. The mantra of budget, budget, budget—I would say again and again, the budget really is the services expressed in dollars. When you reduce the budget, you reduce the dollars going into the services. Not everything is fat; not everything can be trimmed.

For many people in Ontario—and I think of the Family Responsibility Office. It should be ashamed, to everyone on the government side. We take the most vulnerable, we don't provide them with the money that's needed for food and rent, and now we're going to charge them for that service. Everything sounds wonderful when we get the user fee; everything sounds wonderful when we talk privatization.

I have a suspicion that if they could, this government would privatize the opposition and bring in rented people to sit on this side.

Mr Galt: Not a bad idea.

Mr Parsons: And props could be rented from the same firm that supplies the members for that side of the House.

We heard an analogy a few minutes ago about the Queen Mary, and I thought that was an interesting analogy, with the ships, for many of the people in Ontario who have been hurt over the past few years. An example of that is that 10 years ago the ratio between the low-income and the high-income person in Ontario was 30 to 1; it's now 300 to 1. Some went up, and some went down. When I see the statistics that tell me that single female parents with a family are raising their children on an average of \$14,000 a year, I'm ashamed and I'm embarrassed. For these people, the ship analogy they probably think of is that here in Ontario we've got the government in the lifeboat bailing water back into the Titanic. They're getting worse, not better in life. Their average incomes are going down in that group. Granted, from the government perspective—I understand that most of those people didn't vote—they're not real people, because they're not real voters. They are real people. Those are real children.

There will be a day when none of us will sit in this House, but those children will. Those children are going to be our future. The children we're not spending the money on for education and for health now will be living in our houses and will be taking our jobs and will be shaping our province. We need to leave them in a position so that they can carry on with the same vision of Ontario as we have. We're not doing that. Instead, we discount any sort of criticism. How can we ignore the report of the auditor? How can we ignore a neutral, outside individual who painstakingly went through and analyzed and found out we're not dealing with budget savings, we're dealing with a philosophy: We will do the cuts even if they cost more money. There is the old joke that it costs money to economize. That is becoming a horrible living truth in this province. It costs more to do the highways privately, but philosophically it's the right thing to do, and the auditor will ignore it because, well, it doesn't conform with our philosophy, simple as that.

Let's remind ourselves that the issue of budget is part of the picture. We should not be looking for what will win an election three and a half years from now but for what makes our Ontario continue to be our Ontario, four, eight, 12 and 50 years from now.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Again we find ourselves here in the Legislature with a budget bill which gives us the opportunity, as members of both the government and opposition, to speak on a wide range of topics having to do with where the government is at. I'd like to talk a little bit about where we find ourselves today in Ontario vis-à-vis municipal services and where we find ourselves when it comes to law and order in this

province as a result of many of the actions that have been taken by the government.

Oh, yes, I listened intently as the government members stood up and took credit for how well the American economy was doing. If you listen to their logic, everything that has happened is good in the economy. What has happened in the United States is because of the Ontario tax cut; that was basically the argument. But their basic premise is that everything that goes on in Ontario and everything that is so positive is as a result of the tax cut. I guess that is one spin you can put on it, but I would argue there's another side of the argument. If the government is going to go out and do what this government chose to—and clearly it was their decision, given that they won the election in 1995 by a majority government—they decided to go forward and give a tax cut. But we can't stand in this House and say, as the government is trying to make us believe, that all that came out of that was positive. Certainly a lot of negative has come out of that tax cut. I would argue that as time goes on we'll find out just how negative it is. God help us if the economy of Ontario goes down, as it will, because the economy runs in cycles. We will see the American economy start to slow at one point. As Ontario starts to go down, we will have lost our capacity to respond to what's happening in our communities by way of what this government has done in tax cuts.

1640

I would argue that the tax cut really has little to do with dollars and cents; it's a way for the government to basically entrench its agenda. Its agenda is very simple: less government, fewer services, more room for the private sector. Somehow, that will equate to being a better thing. Certainly, when it comes to competition within the economy, manufacturing goods, selling, retailing goods, the private sector must have an upper hand in what happens when it comes to those activities. What the government is trying to do is offload a lot of its responsibility on to the private sector in order to give their friends in the private sector more business opportunities. But in the long run I think that policy is going to come back to haunt us.

We sometimes forget what our history has taught us, that when the government didn't provide certain services in the early days of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, we went without those services and there were basically two classes in our society: one that had and one that did not have. There were more haves and fewer have-nots. Unfortunately, a lot of people went without, and that's why they went to government and asked for government services to be put in place.

Let's talk a little bit about municipal restructuring. You know that this government has embarked on a process of municipal restructuring that dates back to 1996. The government would have you believe that somehow this whole exercise that they've engaged in has been revenue-neutral and has not had any kind of negative effect when it comes to municipal services across Ontario. Nothing could be further from the truth.

If we take a look at what has happened in municipal services in this province, we have slipped a lot when it comes to the services that people rightfully and deservedly are supposed to get from the municipalities.

I would ask members of this assembly, rather than walking up to the local establishments you normally go to, to take a walk and look at what's happening in downtown Toronto. Just look at some of the recent effects that your government has had by way of policies in this one city, the city of Toronto. We have now, in the downtown core of the city, far more visible poverty than we have ever had in the history of this city as I remember it. I'm a young man, I'm 43 years old, so I only remember back to a certain point. I'm sure we can point back to times in history when it was worse. But in modern times this city has slipped a lot. When you take a look at the effects of poverty in our city, they're dramatic. The streets in the downtown core of Toronto, the basic place where tourists come to take a look, are dirtier than they ever have been before. We see more garbage on the street, we see a state of disrepair of our city, the infrastructure of the community is starting to fall apart to a certain degree and the city is a lot dirtier, physically, than it ever has been before. There's a very simple reason for that: Is it because all of a sudden more people are throwing their garbage in the downtown core? No. It's because we don't have the municipal employees we used to have in place before who went around picking up garbage and making sure that our communities were cleaner. That is only one effect of what we're seeing.

If you take a look at the issue of poverty, again, you have far more street people on the streets of Toronto—and, I would argue, in many other communities across Ontario. Not only in Toronto, we have some street people in my community, something we've never seen before in Timmins. During the summer months and this fall, we had people who were basically living out in the bush because they couldn't afford to have an apartment and a roof over their heads. Where those people went this fall is beyond me. I have to hope that things turned around for them. But the economy of northeastern Ontario is not as closely tied to exports in the United States. We're a resource-based economy and our economy has been lagging, I would argue, far behind what has been happening in southern Ontario. As a result, what we're seeing in our communities, because of what's happening in the economy, is that the municipality does not have the ability to respond to what's happening. In our community we even have people—not in the numbers you would have in Toronto—who are without a roof over their heads, without a job, who have had to resort to living in back alleys and in the bush to just get by this summer. We had many of those people come by our constituency office, as well as the Lord's Kitchen and the food bank, to try to find help so they could get by on a day-to-day basis.

The government tries to make us believe that somehow this tax cut has only been positive. I just took two very simple things that people see, and that is, our

communities, our cities, our downtown cores, are falling further and further behind when it comes to the effects of poverty. We're finding that in our province those who have money are doing far better today, and those without are doing far worse, and we're starting to see it.

We see the number of people who are on the streets trying to panhandle in the city of Toronto, as it is in Hamilton, as it is in Timmins—I saw it in Timmins this last summer—as we see it in Sudbury, as we see it in Ottawa. There are far more people panhandling on the streets of our cities and our towns than we ever had before because, I would argue, there has been an effect of the tax cut. The capacity for government to respond to what is happening in your local community, both by way of the municipal government and the provincial government, has very much been diminished by the actions of this government with regard to the tax cut.

Government members will say: "That's because they choose not to work. It's because they made a conscious choice that they didn't want to go out there and find a job." Easily said, but the reality is it's not as easily done. A lot of people are out on the street because our institutions have been depopulated. A certain part of the group of people who find themselves on the streets across Ontario are there because provincial institutions and provincial programs, which used to be able to respond to these people to make sure that they didn't end up on the street, are no longer in place. Even those that remain don't have the capacity to be able to respond to what is happening.

The other issue is housing. I listened earlier on as the Minister of Finance got up and called public housing a boondoggle. I see the member—I always forget your riding, Mr Hastings—from Etobicoke North. It used to be Etobicoke. The new ridings have changed. The member for Etobicoke North agreed that somehow this is a boondoggle, public housing. He fails to remember that public housing was far from a boondoggle. It is the public housing that was put in place in cities and towns across this province, dating back some 25 years, in order to make sure that we had affordable housing for those people within our communities who most needed it.

Seniors: I look at the communities in the city of Timmins. I look at Hearst, Moosonee, Kapuskasing, Val Rita. I look at a community like Moonbeam, which has public housing in place. It's providing affordable housing for the seniors of our communities so that they have a place to live, so that they feel secure, so that they are with other people their age and they're able to socialize. It's no fun when you get to be a senior and you're stuck alone in your home and there is nobody around to chat with and spend some time with. That's part of the reason that we put social housing in place, to make sure that seniors had that ability.

I look at what's happening in Opatatika right now, a small community in my riding of around 300 to 400 people. We have a number of seniors who would like to move into a seniors' housing complex so they can be together and feel a little bit more secure and find that

they have a bit more of a social life. The provincial and federal governments have basically gone out of the housing business. They're in a position where trying to get something like that up and running would be almost impossible.

The other thing that social housing did is provide housing for those people who were basically on disability pensions. People who suffered from mental illnesses, people who suffered from various types of physical ailments, had an ability to get social housing in order to make sure that they had an affordable apartment to live in. Nowadays there are increasingly more and more people in the province of Ontario, because of the demographics and because of immigration and because of, yes, what's happened in the economy, more people living in the economy of Ontario, and there is more and more of a need for social housing. But this government says: "It's not important. We're going to leave it up to the private sector."

The test is in the pudding. The reality is that the private sector is not responding. They're building co-op housing? No. They're building not-for-profit housing? No. They're building condominiums that are selling for \$180,000 to \$220,000 or \$240,000 a pop, and that is a response to what is happening in housing, because there is money to be made in building condominiums, in high-priced, high-end apartments. There is no money for the private sector in providing affordable housing. The reality is that that sector of the rental market is diminishing as far as the number of units available to people. What we're finding is that more and more people, unfortunately, are ending up on the streets.

The government can pretend all they want that somehow or other this tax cut has been a good thing. The reality is that they've had to pay for it, and one of the ways they've done that is they stopped all social housing. We no longer see affordable housing being built inside the province of Ontario by either the federal or provincial government, because they've gotten out of it in order to pay for their tax cuts. That's what they've done. The government will say that's a good thing. Tell it to the people who are lining up and to get affordable housing units—not a very pleasurable thing. They're now having to wait on waiting lists for two and three years to get a unit because there are so few units available. I don't think that's a good policy for the province.

1650

Take a look at the condition of the roads in our municipalities. The infrastructure of this province, when it comes to roads, is falling further and further behind. I'll just quote what came out of the auditor's report not more than a week ago. The province has lost the capacity to even maintain and supervise what's happening on its own highways, let alone what's happening on municipal roads. Basically the auditor was saying the other day that the Ministry of Transportation does not have the number of people it needs within the ministry to supervise what's happening when it comes to the private sector doing work on our highways that has been contracted by the

province. They don't have the capacity to keep up in capital costs the amount of work that needs to be done on the highways to keep them up to a standard of repair that is necessary to keep those highways up to snuff.

There's a short-term saving. The government can decide, as it did, not to spend the capital dollars necessary to maintain our highways and local roads. You're not going to see the effect immediately if the government does what it decided to do, which was to cut back on the capital dollars going to the Ministry of Transportation to keep up highways, and to cut transfers to municipalities, which in effect reduces the amount of money available for roads. People aren't going to see it immediately. The government looks like a genius. They save \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion in the first year and look as if they know what they're doing, and it looks like a good thing because the bottom line looks better.

But, Mr Speaker, you would know as well as I do, coming from northern Ontario, that over the longer term that policy is going to cost us money. Future governments—and, yes, the taxpayer—are going to end up having to pay far more money in the future to try to bring the roads up to snuff that have been taken out of the cycle of reconstruction that we used to have in place. The Ministry of Transportation, as you know, had a cycle that said that about every 10 years every road gets a certain amount of repair to keep it up to a standard. That is falling further and further behind, because the Ministry of Transportation is no longer doing the kind of work it used to do to keep our highways in repair, and with all the downloading, municipalities certainly don't have the amount of money they need to keep their roads in repair.

Yes, the government could argue that the tax cut has given taxpayers an immediate hit in their wallet—no argument. But in the long run the taxpayer is going to end up paying more because they're going to have to offset the cost of reconstructing those roads in future years, which will be more expensive. Because we know, by way of inflation, that as years go on it gets more and more expensive to repair these things. So you really don't save anything in the long run, you only save in the short run.

Just in passing, I would also like to say that I remember standing in this House when Mr Palladini was the Minister of Transportation and telling him, "Don't go the way of privatizing highway maintenance in this province, as you have done, because in the end you won't save any money." The Minister of Transportation, Mr Palladini, got up in the House, in about 1996 or 1997—I'd have to go back and look at Hansard—and said, "We're going to save a whole bunch of money if we privatize highway maintenance in this province." In fact, he stood in this House, along with the Minister of Finance, and said, "If we don't save at least 5% by this initiative, it's not worth doing."

The auditor's report came out last week. What did it say? In some cases it was more expensive to maintain our highways by way of the private sector as compared to the province, and in other sections of the province it was

maybe less expensive but they certainly didn't save the 5%. When you average it, we saved 0.2% of dollars maintaining our highways by way of private sector bids, where we've gone with this new system, and we don't even have the capacity to go out and check if the private sector is doing the kind of work that has to be done. So, yes, the tax cut got a couple of people a few bucks in their pocket, mostly those with more money, but we're paying for it in the long run.

That's not to speak to what's happened by way of user fees. If we take a look at the user fees that are now being charged for services that used to be delivered free by the province or the municipality, or in some cases agencies, we're now having to pay for that by way of user fees. In fact, I was in Val Rita last Friday meeting with the community council. They were telling me about a plan they had to try to move water and sewer expansion in their community to deal with the potential ability to attract new citizens into their community. They would like to be able to expand that so that they can service another 10 lots. In Val Rita, that's a big thing; in Toronto, it's not. Ten lots in Toronto wouldn't even be a speck, but in Val Rita 10 lots is a lot. First of all, there's no provincial dollars to help them do the kinds of expansion that they need to in order to get water and sewer in, so they're on their own. So it means the local taxpayer in Val Rita is going to have to pay through the nose to be able to update their water and sewer system to accept another 10 lots in that community because the province does not want to share the cost over the provincial system, as we used to do before.

But the interesting thing is that when the municipality went to the Ministry of the Environment—and listen to this, Chair of Management Board, because you probably know this, but I think this is really amazing. They went to the Ministry of the Environment, the provincial ministry, in order to try to deal with getting the permitting in place in order to do this expansion, getting ready to do all the permitting in the event that they can raise the dollars to do it, and they were charged a user fee, by the Ministry of the Environment, on each plan, about \$10,000 to \$15,000. There's a tax cut for somebody. If you added up the tax cuts for all the citizens who got a tax cut in the community of Val Rita, and you start to add up the costs the municipality is picking up when it comes to user fees on this and other initiatives, the tax cut is almost negated, I would argue. It probably is negated, if you really looked into it. So now the municipality of Val Rita, as are all other municipalities across the province, is having to go out and pay user fees to go to the Ministry of the Environment, a provincial ministry, to get permitting that is required by the province for the municipality to do its job.

This government says, "We're trying to make things easier for municipalities to do business." This is not making it easier for them to do planning. This is not making it easier for them to go out and do expansion in their community. It's making it unaffordable for them to do it. I would argue that the government tries to look good by

way of the tax cuts, but the reality, as Val Rita is figuring out, as other municipalities are, is that this tax cut is costing them money.

When we look at what this government is doing by way of amalgamation when it comes to what's going on in Ontario, we know that the provincial government forced the amalgamations in the city of Toronto. We said back then, "Never mind what we said; the citizens of Toronto said by referendum that they did not want to do this." You laugh at the taxpayers who had a referendum, who said no to amalgamation in the city of Toronto. If the Conservatives laugh in the face of referendums, I guess that puts to shame your entire position when it comes to referendums that you have taken in previous elections. But the reality is that taxpayers, by way of referendum, said: "No, Mike Harris; no, Al Leach; no, Steve Gilchrist,"—because he was one of the big pushers of this thing the last time—"we don't want to go with amalgamation. We want to have our own communities, and that is our choice as taxpayers." This government said, "No; we have a top-down solution. I, Mike Harris, and the rest of my government, am going to shove down your throats what I want to do in the municipality of Toronto."

Did you ever think for one second that maybe it wasn't your decision to make; rather, it was the decision of the taxpayers to decide if they wanted to have a local community or not? Now this government hasn't learned by way of what they had happen in Toronto, never mind they went against what the taxpayers wanted, never mind they had a top-down process that shoved the process down their throats and in the end we're not even saving money. Mel Lastman—let's not go there. He's the guy who's calling for separate provinces for the city of Toronto, and a few other things.

We haven't proven that we've saved any money—I would argue, in some cases we're paying more—and we've made government in the city of Toronto bigger in a lot of respects as far as the administration this thing has created, and we've made it less accountable, because now when a citizen, the taxpayer—yes, the member for Etobicoke North—goes to get services from his municipality or, more importantly, wants to hold the municipality accountable for decisions, they have far less by way of the democratic process to deal with because, yes, there are fewer politicians. There's a much larger council with fewer politicians, and they have less time to be able to deal with the concerns of the people, the taxpayers.

1700

Now the government says, "This was such a successful initiative, we're now going to go out and force amalgamation on North Haldimand, we're going to do it in Sudbury, we're going to do it in Hamilton, and then we're going to do it in Ottawa." Coming to a city near you. Well, give your heads a shake. Did you ever think that maybe you should first of all go to the taxpayers and ask them what they want to do, and say yes, if the people in Stoney Creek or the people in Kanata or in Valley East want to merge with the cities that are near them, let them

make a decision. If you really believe in democracy, hold a referendum. We'll just use one for an example.

If Stoney Creek were to decide, by way of referendum, that they don't want to amalgamate with Hamilton, did you ever think that maybe that's democracy in action? If they decide they want a municipal structure that is more or less expensive, that's their business. It's not for us to go in and say: "We know best. We're the big, provincial government. We're Mike Harris. We have all the answers. Let's shove another process down your throats. Let's just shove it down your throats so far that you don't have a say because democracy doesn't matter."

I find it very difficult to take, the way the government takes the approach when it comes to finding solutions for people in this province. They never think about what it means to the taxpayer. They say: "We know best. We're a bunch of Conservatives. We're arrogant. We can do anything we want and we'll shove it down your throats." Let the taxpayers decide. It's their municipalities, it's their province.

I again had an opportunity over Friday and Saturday to meet, as I'm sure other members in this assembly did in their own riding, many people across the riding of Timmins-James Bay. I was between Val Rita and Timmins this week. We did Val Rita, a bit of Kapuskasing, stopped in Smooth Rock to see a few people and did Timmins. You know what they're worried about now? They were looking at this amalgamation thing that's going on in the four big municipalities that are now engaged in it by way of getting it shoved down their throats by the province and they are worried about what's going to happen to them. They're saying: "We're living here in Val Rita. We don't want to be part of Kapuskasing. We chose to form our own community called Val Rita, because we have some different objectives than the community of Kapuskasing." Yes, Val Rita and Kapuskasing are not very far apart—some six or seven miles apart—but they decided to have their own municipality, and you know what? Their tax structure is less than what you're paying in Kapuskasing. Yes, they've got fewer services but that's a choice they made in Val Rita.

The municipalities in those areas, not all the municipal politicians but most of the municipal—

Hon Mr Stockwell: They have choices.

Mr Bisson: You're not giving them any choices. What are you talking about? You give them no choice. You go in with a forced amalgamation process and you tell them what they have to get. They have no say. I'm just saying, as a New Democrat, that if the citizens in a community—I'll just use Val Rita as an example—decide they want to live in a community that offers fewer or more services, that has fewer or more taxes, that's their decision. Let them decide by way of referendum what type of municipal governance they're going to have—not to have it shoved down their throats by the province. That, to me, is not a good system democracy. That's a system where Big Brother knows best, and Mike Harris is the Biggest Brother I have ever known when it

comes to big government. He just shoves it down the throats of the people in the local municipalities.

On the question of Val Rita and other communities, people this weekend were talking on the streets, not just the politicians at the local level, and they were worried. They were saying, "We're seeing what's happening." A report was released on Friday about Sudbury, Hamilton and others and they were worried about what's going to happen in their communities.

At the same time that was happening, the government did something which I'll give them some credit for. They went to the community of Kapuskasing and they offset some of the transfers back to the municipality because the municipality has lost money with regard to assessment by the way of Spruce Falls. The provincial government went in and gave J.-C. Caron, the mayor of Kapuskasing, about \$2.4 million to offset the loss in assessment, so a good thing. But part of the condition of getting that money was that they have to engage and start discussions about how to amalgamate, possibilities of amalgamation with local municipalities around them. People in my communities, Val Rita and others, were saying: "Hang on. Hold it a second. We're happy that Kapuskasing got \$2.4 million but we don't want to amalgamate. We don't want to become part of Kapuskasing. We're happy being in Val Rita."

The people in Opasatika told me the same thing. They don't want to be part of Kap. They want to remain who they are. They want to remain the community of Opasatika, and the people of Moonbeam and the people of Fauquier, and the people of Smooth Rock Falls. They don't want to be part of a larger entity. They want to remain as citizens of their own community because, in the end, they make their own choices in those communities about what they're going to be doing. They decide what the focus is going to be for the times those councils are in place and then they move ahead.

I'll tell you something: There's more community spirit in those communities than in big cities like Toronto or Ottawa. Those communities are good. Toronto is a great city, Ottawa is a great city, but those small communities have a spirit of their own. If you try to bring them into larger entities, you're going to take away the spirit they have in those communities.

You know what makes those communities go? Let me tell you what happens in places like Opasatika and Val Rita, to the member for Etobicoke North. Do you know how big the administration is for the town of Val Rita? One and a half staff people, and a whole bunch of volunteers.

I was talking to the fire chief in Val Rita just the other day and he said to me: "You know, I do this gladly. I volunteer for my community because I know it's my community. But if you're coming to me and you're now saying I'm going to be part of a larger municipality the size of whatever, around Kapuskasing, I probably don't want to volunteer because I know in the end we will not be making our own decisions for Val Rita. Decisions will be made in the larger centres, and we're going to get the

crumbs on the outside." The further you are from the centre, the smaller the crumbs will be.

You are going to stifle the volunteerism that's going on in those communities that are volunteering services back to their communities. That's how those communities operate, and I think we're doing them a disservice when we try to force amalgamation on them. They are efficient administrations, they work well, they do the right thing, they set the priorities with their communities, and there's a community spirit in those communities that you don't see in many other places. I think we need to find ways to strengthen that, not ways to make it less.

I want to also touch on another issue that deals with what's happening by way of this tax cut. I talked about communities, and one of the very important services in communities is policing. It's a shame. We look at the number of cops we have on the streets today in Ontario as compared to 1995 and there are far fewer cops today than there were under the NDP government, because this government said they were going to go the way of the tax cut and one of the ways to go the way of the tax cut was to not give the kind of support that police services need across this province. So we have fewer cops on the street making our communities safe now than we did in 1995.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I hear the members across the way talk about the 1,000-police initiative that this government has started up. Let's talk about the 1,000-police initiative. Under David Christopherson, the then Solicitor General of the NDP government, we announced and we started the 1,000-police initiative across the province. We started the process, but do you know what's interesting? When we put in place the 1,000-police initiative, we put it in place in such a way that said police departments across Ontario will not be able to use these 1,000 police to replace retiring policemen, that these were for newly created police positions within the communities of Ontario. For example, in the city of Timmins, you had at that time a police department I think of around 65 police officers. We've had about five or seven of them retire and this 1,000—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order. Members know that only one member can speak at a time and that the member for Timmins-James Bay has the floor.

Continue.

Mr Bisson: The point I make is this: In the city of Timmins, we had about 65 police officers in 1995. I might be off on my numbers, but it's around the same ratio. I think it was 65 police officers or 60 in 1995. But the point I'm making is this: We had about 65 police officers in 1995. About five of them retired over a period of time. The Mike Harris government, on being elected in 1995, cancelled the police initiative established by the former NDP government that would have put 1,000 new cops into cities across Ontario. This government cancelled it and when they brought it back, they tried to

announce it as a new initiative that they invented. Hogwash, as Premier Mike Harris said the other day, but on a different subject.

The reality is that David Christopherson, Bob Rae and the NDP government started the 1,000-police initiative and the difference—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: Listen to this. The former Speaker should at least get to his chair to heckle, I would hope. He used to tell me that when he was in the chair.

The difference between the NDP and the Conservative program was that our program was established—look at the rules—and it only was able to put new cops on the road, not to replace retiring police officers. This program now is being used to replace retiring police officers only. If you look in the city of Timmins, we had 65 cops. They've been able to hire four police through this particular program, barely enough to even keep up with the retirements in our community. So we have fewer police officers in the cities across Ontario because of what this government is doing. Yes, it's given people a tax cut, but it's equated to fewer cops on our city streets. That's what they have done.

1710

We know by way of statistics that there are literally thousands of police officers who are coming up to retirement over the next couple of years, and this government has no response in how to deal with those retiring police officers other than trying to deal with 1,000 police officers that they are replacing by way of a program that was supposedly set up in order to augment police, not keep up with what is happening by way of retirement.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: The government is howling on the other side because they somehow see this as being their turf. Well, I'm telling you, you might think it's your turf, but you have a poor record.

Take a look at what happens with crime across the province. This government tries to make us believe they've got some kind of response to crime. They are going to go out there and do some neat things. So they go out and they do what? They attack squeeze kids. That's the response of this government when it comes to crime. They go after panhandlers. They are going after the victims of poverty, the victims of the economy as set up by the Mike Harris government and their tax cuts. Their law is, make laws to go after the poor, make laws in order to fix the problems that were created by your mess, and that's supposed to be you being tough on crime.

You want to do something innovative for crime in Ontario? Why not hire more crowns?

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: The member for Etobicoke North, you should try listening.

I make a suggestion, and a former Solicitor General is here: If you are going to put money into the system, why not hire more provincial crown attorneys so that we're at least able to prosecute the convictions that are brought forward by the police officers across this province? The

deterrent to crime often is not just the law, or often not the punishment; the deterrent is knowing that you're not going to get—hang on. Let me do that again.

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Thank you. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity.

The point I make is this: The deterrent to crime often is not the penalty but the fact that you might get caught. If somebody is out there thinking, "I might just get caught because there are more cops on the streets, and if I do get caught, the prosecuting attorneys across the province are going to try my case in a speedy manner and I will get the full extent of the law," that person is less likely to go out and commit a crime than they would be under the system that you have now. Why? You have fewer cops on the streets. We have a system that is overloaded. We are going to end up in another Askov decision where we are going to have to throw out court cases because you don't have the capacity in the system to respond to the charges that are being brought into it.

I would say to you that you would probably be better off spending some time trying to set up a couple of programs across the province in some places where it's worse than others—I would argue the Niagara region, Toronto and a few other places that I can think of—to hire extra crown attorneys to make sure we have the resources necessary to try those charges that are brought forward by police.

When I talk to cops across this province, they are telling me what they are sick of. They are sick and tired of going out and doing their jobs, charging somebody, doing an investigation, working hard to get a charge, bringing them to court, and because the court doesn't have the capacity to deal with them, because we don't have enough crowns, the darn thing is thrown out. They don't have the capacity to respond because this government does not give the crown attorneys and does not give the court system enough money to prosecute the charges that are brought in by the cops.

If you want to support cops in this province, there are two simple things you can do: first, hire more of them, something that you're not—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: No, you're not. You're not even replacing them. We've got 600 fewer cops in Ontario now than we had in 1995, so don't try to spin that. Talk about the truth of what's going on with your record.

The second thing that you can do is to actually go out there and give those cops some support. Let them know that when they go out onto the street and they apprehend somebody and they charge somebody, they at least have a chance of getting that person before the courts in a swift period of time, convicting them and making sure that the charge sticks because we have crowns who are capable of responding.

Mr Speaker, I know the member for Sault Ste Marie has much more to say on this, and I thank you for this time in debate.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm pleased to stand and speak to the time allocation motion on Bill 14, the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999.

I guess I can assume from the speech of the member for Timmins-James Bay that the NDP is not going to support this. However, I do have to say that either he is blessed with a convenient memory or he needs a new speechwriter. If their government was so supportive of the police in Ontario, why did they put in a moratorium on police hiring? He either conveniently forgot that or his speechwriter didn't give him the facts. I'll give him the benefit of the doubt; I think his speechwriter didn't give him the facts.

I think we know how the NDP will vote on this, but I will be very interested to see how the Liberals vote on this. As we know, the Liberals—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's interesting. The member for Timmins-James Bay says he knows how they're going to vote. I'm not so sure, because they talk out of both sides of their mouth.

Mr Speaker, as you are quite aware, the Liberals have opposed all 69 tax cuts that this government put into effect in the last Legislature, and they opposed the 30 tax cuts by our government in this Legislature—a total of 99 tax cuts, and they opposed each and every one of them. However, what did they do when we introduced Bill 7, the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act? They supported it. They spent days talking against it, but then they turned around and supported it. So I'll be very interested in how the Liberals are going to vote on this, because we're never too sure.

In his article in the Toronto Star today, Ian Urquhart said, "The Liberals have shown an aversion to ... policies. They seem to prefer being all things to all people." I think that's indicative—

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. Perhaps the conversations could be kept down. Particularly the Minister of Labour knows that he needs to be in his own seat.

Member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: We also know that the NDP would continue their policies of tax and spend and they would regulate. When I was in business, prior to 1995, there was a little joke in business about the NDP. They would tax a business until the business whined. Then they would tax some more. The business would whine some more. Then they would tax some more. The business would whine some more. Then they would regulate. The business would whine. Then they would impose more taxes. The business would stop whining. Then the NDP would come along and subsidize to try to get the business back into business. That's the NDP policy, but we're never too sure what position the Liberals are going to take. One day they're over here, the next day they're over there. That is typical of being a Liberal.

We have taken a very strong position on tax cuts. Our government campaigned on it in 1995. Our government campaigned on it again in 1999. The public is sick of taxes. They want balanced budgets, which we have

committed to doing—that legislation was passed last week. The debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs. Why can these people not get it through their heads? There have been 617,000 net new jobs since 1995. That was the latest figure in October. The net new jobs are increasing at such a rate that we're not too sure how many it could be. It could be 640,000 or 650,000 as I speak. We know they create jobs.

I know what the Liberals say about jobs. I have it right here in Hansard. On Monday, November 22, the member for Essex said, "You know, member from Kitchener, a job doesn't mean a damn thing." In 1995 there were a lot of people in Ontario—a lot of people in Kitchener, in my riding of Kitchener Centre—who cared about jobs. They didn't have jobs. So I am pleased to say that our government's tax policies are creating jobs, and the jobs are increasing revenue.

What has happened to revenue in this province? Let's just take a look here. I just have to find it here. In 1995-96, government revenue was \$49.5 billion. That was before the tax cuts. Now we have fully implemented 30% tax cuts, plus the people of Ontario have had a further 5% in July of this year; that's what we're debating here, to give passage to that. Revenues have increased from \$49.5 billion to \$52.5 billion in 1997-98. Revenues have gone up. Taxes have gone down.

1720

Liberals don't understand this, and we know the NDP don't understand this, but it's a fact of life, people. Our revenues are up because the economy has improved. As a result of the economy improving, and with increased revenues, we can pour that money into health care. You claim you like that. I know you would have restricted health care spending to \$17 billion. You campaigned on that in 1995, remember? It was in your platform, the red book. Well, health care spending in Ontario now is \$20.6 billion. It's going to go up another 20% because of revenues increasing, because the economy has improved, because jobs have increased. I know you have trouble with that, but that's a fact of life. Business understands that. The general public understands that. That's why they re-elected us this year. The public understands that, but you have trouble with that. I don't understand why the Liberals can't get it through their heads.

Mr Hastings: They're slow learners.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, I guess they are.

They would like to have us believe that they have a monopoly on caring. They raise the issue about homelessness all the time. They talk about how homelessness has increased. Homelessness increases if you can't get a job. There would be a lot more homeless people on the streets if there weren't 617,000 new jobs since 1995.

You have trouble with that too; I can see that. The Liberal House leader is sitting there and he's saying, "Oh, gee, well"—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know. Well, let me explain something to you. When you don't have a job, you don't have any money, and when you don't have any money, you

can't pay your mortgage or you can't pay your rent. Therefore you wind up on the streets.

When you do have a job, you have enough money to pay your rent or your mortgage. And do you know what? You also then have enough money to pay taxes, which increases government revenues.

I know, you're having trouble again. The member from Sarnia-Lambton is over there shaking her head; she has trouble understanding. Well, it's a simple case of economics. We learned it in Economics 101 in university many years ago. Now they teach it, but they teach other things as well. But I know you're having trouble with that. That's OK.

In the Canadian Federation of Independent Business members' survey in July this year, survey 44, they asked businesses, "Which of the following issues should be the high priorities for CFIB action?" Do you know what the top issue was? The top issue was total tax burden. Some 81.8% of the members said that total tax burden was their number one priority. They realized that what our government is doing is enabling business, through our tax policies, to hire more people. Business understands that and most employees understand that. The Liberals don't. The Liberals are having trouble with that. They also ask in their survey: "Which of the following taxes and charges are the most harmful to the operation of your business? Circle as many as apply." Mr Speaker, 49.3% said that personal income tax was the most harmful to the operation of their business, because it reduces their competitiveness.

The member from St Catharines was up here speaking earlier about competitiveness. The member from Windsor West was talking about trade being so effective for Ontario. Of course it is. We know it is. But in order for our businesses to trade with the United States, they must be competitive. Our tax policies have helped that competitiveness.

That's what it's all about. It's creating an environment in which there will be jobs, creating an environment in which government revenues will increase. Yes, we would like to be able to pay more on education and health care. We would love to be able to do that, and if we didn't have to pay \$9 billion interest on debt that was built up in this province over the last 10 years, we could do so. From 1985 to 1995 we built up such a massive debt that we were paying \$9 billion a year in interest payments.

I know that members of the Liberal Party are going to say, "How much have you increased the debt?" It's very important to point out here that we are not increasing the interest payments. Do you know why? We are not increasing the interest payments, simply because we have got a better interest rate than your government was able to get or better than the NDP was able to get. The differential between government prime and what we're paying is better than it was under your government.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: You have trouble with that, don't you? I can see. You're laughing. You're going, "Oh, oh." It's so hard to believe for you people. I know. That's

because you don't understand business. You don't understand economics.

I want to point out the debate is over. We have created jobs. Tax cuts do create jobs.

Do you remember how Ontarians were suffering in 1990, 1991 and 1992? Do you remember that? No jobs. I know you remember. A large part of that was created by the Liberals' tax policies in 1988, 1989, and then the NDP came into power and introduced a budget that was totally out of whack—\$11.3-billion deficit, if I remember correctly. But the NDP will say that that was in large part due to the Liberals' spending.

The Liberals talk about the fact that they introduced the last balanced budget in 1989. Do you remember that? The Liberals have been saying that here lately. The Liberals like talking about the Ontario auditor too. The Ontario auditor says there was no balanced budget. It's one thing to introduce it; it's another to totally spend beyond what the budget allowed for. You have trouble with that too, don't you?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have trouble with anybody who says that—

Mr Wettlaufer: You have trouble with that too. Interesting.

Ontario leads the Great Lakes region in job creation. That's who we are competing with. They're our business competitors, our trade competitors, the States and the other provinces in the Great Lakes region, and we are doing better than they are. We are increasing our job creation. Get this: Between February 1998 and February 1999, we increased job creation by 3.7%. It has increased even more since then, far ahead of Minnesota, which was at 2%; New York at 1.7%, one of our major competitors. New York only increased—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just a few minutes ago, this member quoted Hansard on November 22 and he said, "The member from Essex said, 'A job doesn't mean a damn thing.'" Your memory is very selective. You didn't continue to say, when I was speaking on—

The Acting Speaker: This is not a point of order. You can correct your own record; you can't correct anyone else's.

1730

Mr Wettlaufer: The member raises a point. He said I didn't continue that he said it didn't mean a thing to a child in a classroom. I admit that I didn't say that. However, I want to point out to the member that a job means a whole lot to that child in the classroom, because if his father or mother does not have the income to provide him with the necessities of life at home, then that means a terrific amount to that child in the classroom. I'm glad he raised that.

A job for his parents is very important to that child in the classroom, because he will have something to eat. Do you know what something to eat means to that child? It means an awful lot to the people in my riding.

Mr Crozier: It means a lot to the kids in my riding because—

The Acting Speaker: Member for Essex, come to order.

Mr Wettlaufer: Mr Speaker, it's obvious that I've touched a nerve here.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I don't presume to be quite as eloquent as the member for Kitchener Centre, but I certainly want to make a comment on Bill 14, and also on the comments of a number of members.

The government is taking credit for a booming economy, and I find this incredible. I equate this government taking credit for a booming economy to a rooster taking credit for the sunrise. The members across the way talk over and over about budgets and about tax cuts. But in reality we know they are not good managers of the services they are supposed to provide to the people of this province. The auditor's report qualified that they're not good managers, and the people of the province see the effect of that every single day.

The government gives out contracts that cost more and not less. They tell hospitals to restructure, but by the time they get around to it, it costs four or five times more than when it was initially going to take place.

They're not good managers because they don't look at need; they only look at budget. They don't look at the fact that we now have a province that cannot provide cancer treatment to seven out of 10 patients, which is incredible. That is poor management. Good managers look at the need for services, and then they provide it with fiscal responsibility.

This government has a tendency to talk about budgets and tax cuts, but you never hear them talk about their debt. They keep talking about debts that other governments have increased. But here we are in a booming economy, and this government has increased the debt by \$21 billion over the last four years. Not only that, I think this year it's going up another \$4 billion. We never hear them talk about that. No one on the other side of the House talks about the credit rating, which they have been unable to increase. It's still AA-, but you don't hear anyone talk about that.

There is development that we need to talk about that this government doesn't even discuss, and it's called people development. One part of the equation is a simplistic approach to good government. It is my experience that this government does not have an understanding of people development and how it relates to sustained economic development. The Auditor General's report discusses many examples when it comes to poor management. We can talk about tax cuts all you want, but you can be poor managers of less money as much as you can be poor managers of more money.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In the time I have, I just want to put a couple of points on the record here this afternoon.

One is about the nature of the bill we're discussing here. It's another in a long list of closure motions that this government keeps bringing before us so that we don't get the fulsome debate that is required, because

these pieces of legislation have some long-lasting and important impacts on the people of Ontario and in particular the people of my community. This is the third closure motion we've had and debated in this House in the last three days that we've sat—three closure motions.

The Minister of Labour thinks this is OK. He puts his hand out as if, "So what?" It's the diminishing of our ability to participate in the democratic process here in this House: three days; three closure motions. I don't understand it, and I think that in the long haul the loser in all of this will be the taxpayer, the constituent of the province of Ontario.

Let me just share with the people out there—because the folks in here I think know what's on the table right now and what we're debating. It says here that:

"Pursuant to standing order 46, and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts"—a lot of acts—"in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario, when Bill 14 is next called as a government order"—which was done this afternoon—"the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and, at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

"That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

"That the order for third reading of the bill may then immediately be called."

So we've gone from some slight debate on second reading to an ordering of the bill at second reading without any amendment, move directly to third reading and then vote on third reading, and the bill is through the House. Since when is that democracy? Since when is that an allowance for the participation by members of this House in the ordering of business and the development of policy and legislation as it affects the constituents of this province?

Then it goes on to say, "When the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill," which is what we're into now. "At 5:55 pm ... as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment." We're disposing of third reading of this bill here this afternoon. So we've gone from second reading to third reading to some limited debate on that third reading, and then we're forcing it through the House.

"That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding 'Deferred Votes'; and

"That in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes."

Once again, and we've said this over and over in this place over the last four and half years, this Conservative Party, which got government in 1995, declared very early

on in its mandate that it didn't want to be government; it got re-elected again in 1999; in its speech from the throne reiterated its statement that it didn't want to be government; and now we have an example before us here today of just exactly what that means. It means that they don't believe in the process here. They don't believe in the give and take and the checks and balances of this place that have been built up over a long number of years by parties of different persuasions and different stripes—Conservatives, Liberals, New Democrats—so that we don't put something in place in great haste that at the end of the day we will regret, that at the end of the day we have to bring more legislation back to fix, but that in fact will be, when we're finished with it, in the best interests of the people of Ontario and building up a province that the world continues to envy and wants to emulate in very significant ways.

That's one of the points I wanted to raise here this afternoon in the time that I had to speak on this closure motion and on this bill.

The other thing I wanted to talk to is to respond somewhat to some of the commentary from across the way. It is, frankly, in my view, simply put, incorrect. There's a lot of incorrect information being put on the record and I just thought I would by way of example share with you one of those things.

1740

This afternoon the member for Northumberland got up in his place and suggested that this government said it would balance the budget in five years. That's what you said. Then we read from the Common Sense Revolution, which some of us still happen to have a copy of—I suppose you guys have probably all burned yours, just in case somebody should challenge you on the authenticity of some of the policies that you've put in place—"This plan will fully balance the Ontario budget within our first mandate." It seems to me this is the second mandate. Are we into the second mandate? Maybe I've got it wrong here; maybe you're still in your first mandate. But it seems to me we went before the province on, I think it was June 3, 1999; there was an election and you guys are into your second mandate. And guess what? You haven't balanced the budget yet.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You've got the wrong one.

Mr Martin: No, this is the one. This is the Common Sense Revolution. The member for Northumberland very clearly put on the record here this afternoon that the promise was that your government was going to balance the budget in your first mandate. That's on page 5, the third sheet in the book. You're very early into your Common Sense Revolution and already you've broken a promise. This is the government that said, "We do what we say we're going to do." You puff your chest up and say, "We did what we said we were going to do." Here we are on one of the more fundamental pieces of your—

Mr Galt: Point of order, Mr Speaker: The current presentation is pointing out a mistake that I made, and I just want to correct his correction. I think that's only fair.

The Acting Speaker: You can't do that. That's not a point of order.

Mr Martin: Obviously, Speaker, I've twigged some interest over here. I've touched a nerve. He did admit to having made a mistake. That's probably the first time in—I've been here for almost five years now. It's the first time I've heard any one of them over there suggest even for a second that they might have made a mistake. We should mark on the clock here, do something special this afternoon—

Mr Galt: Point of order, Mr Speaker: He misunderstood again. I was correcting his mistake, that he was trying—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Martin: We have the member over the way doing a little tap dance now about who actually made a mistake. I suggest he did—and we'll have a look at Hansard tomorrow—say just a few minutes ago that I was correcting his mistake. He admitted that he made a mistake. That's refreshing. Maybe it's a window open now to some new approach to government around here, where we actually have some honesty coming from across the floor and an admission to the fact that you're not fulfilling your promises, you're not doing everything you said you were going to do. On an issue of some fundamental importance, you broke the promise. You said you were going to balance the budget. You said you were going to balance it in your first term, and you didn't do it. Imagine that. You didn't balance the budget. Let me tell you what you did do.

The Acting Speaker: Perhaps the member could address his comments through the Chair.

Mr Martin: Certainly, Speaker, through the Chair. Do you know what they did instead of balancing the budget? They gave the bank away. As soon as they got elected, all their friends and benefactors lined up at the door with their hands out and said: "Give us money. We got you elected; you have to deliver." So they did. They brought in the tax break. And we know from the analysis that was done, from the figures we put out during the election and all the way through the last mandate, that your friends and benefactors, the people at the top end, the folks making all the money, made off like bandits with your tax break. You gave them all the money, so you had no money left to balance the budget. You had a choice to make. The choice was very clear.

Mr Hastings: Shame on you.

Mr Martin: The member for Etobicoke North is saying, "Shame on you." I'm saying shame on you. You had a choice to make. Do you know what the choice was? It was give the money to your friends and benefactors on one hand, or balance the budget on the other. Do you know what you chose to do? You chose to give the money to your friends and benefactors by way of the tax break, and you didn't balance the budget. As a matter of fact, what you did was run up the debt. Here's the party that prides itself on knowing how to manage fiscal issues. Here's the party that said, "We don't believe in

debt; we would never run up a debt," pointing a finger at the federal government, talking about them running up a debt. Let me tell the people of Ontario what you did. We left the province with \$80 billion of debt because we spent money in some really difficult economic times in this province to be sure that programs stayed in place, that people didn't lose their jobs. These guys got in in some of the better economic times that this province had seen in a long time, and what did they do? They said they were going to balance the budget—

Mr Hastings: And we are.

Mr Martin: —but they ran up the debt. The debt is now, today, as we speak, member for Etobicoke North, at some \$120 billion; \$40 billion more in debt since you come in. That's \$10 billion a year that you put this province in debt since you've been government. They borrowed \$10 billion a year to pay for the tax break that they gave their rich friends and benefactors.

They stand up over there as if they had just gone to church or something, preaching fiscal responsibility, "We're going to balance the deficit and we're going to straighten out the economy and we're going to make sure that this province is never in debt anymore," when in fact the details of the budgets that they keep putting out speak a completely different story: \$40 billion more in debt than we were in 1995.

Having said that, I have to tell you that I worry. We're in a time of some really exciting and interesting and positive economic times in this province, it seems. If you read the financial pages of the newspapers these days, corporations and big business and industry are making historically record-high profits in this province, although I have to tell you that some of that profit is being generated on the backs of some of the people who used to work in those industries.

I share with you and the members across the way a piece out of the National Post, Friday, November 19, where the TD Bank was posting a record profit. Right underneath it, though, it plans to cut jobs. So I worry that as this economy that's not based on anything really concrete or substantial continues to run its course, eventually it will run out of steam.

It's based on a couple of things that I don't think are sustainable or long-term in nature. One is that it's hugely speculative, speculation of a kind that is quite worrisome and should be quite worrisome to anybody who's watching the economy of this province. The other is that the good economy that we're seeing is built on some of the bigger corporations and financial institutions laying off people. It's not on new innovations, it's not on new intelligence, it's not on new research and development; it's on cutting jobs.

Every year we see big corporations coming in and announcing increased profits and usually, if not with the announcement then shortly thereafter, there's a piece that comes out that says, "We're going to cut more jobs so that next year we can announce another historically record-high increase in our profitability so that our share-

holders will be happy." Well, eventually that house of cards comes falling down and, alas, this government has no economic development programs to speak of to kick in when that economy begins to come crashing down.

I just want to put very briefly on the record another point this afternoon that nobody has talked about much in the last four and a half years in this place. That is that some of the growth in the economy, some of the good news that we've seen over the last four years, yes, is very much dependent on the growth in the US economy, but it's also very much a result of initiatives taken by the NDP government from 1990 to 1995 that only began to show fruit, only began to produce some positive results, soon after these folks took office.

We governed, people will remember, in some very difficult times. There was some great upheaval. We were dealing in a major way with the Mulroney free trade deal and the high interest rates that he was promoting and the GST and the start of a terrible recession.

We put in place as a government a number of very exciting initiatives which I will get into in more detail at another time in this House so the folks across the way will remember and realize that some of the jobs that we're seeing out there, not all of them, are actually a result of some of the things that we had done when we were in government, particularly in places like Sault Ste Marie, where at Algoma Steel, by way of the restructuring and the leadership that we gave and some of the guarantees that we put in place, bringing together the management of that corporation with the workers, with the financial institutions, we saved some 4,000 to 5,000 jobs in that community, not to speak of St Mary's Paper, where we saved another 300 jobs. That company now has reinvested in further—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Yes, they took pay cuts. Unlike the hockey players, they took pay cuts and that company is doing well too.

The list goes on and on, Mr Speaker; places like your riding now, like Elliott Lake, where we put a fund of \$250 million on the table to deal with the closure of the mines that they've taken and put into some very good small and medium-sized businesses that are creating jobs in that area—not enough, mind you, but a few.

I go on record here this afternoon to suggest that it's wrong for us to be ramming legislation through at the breakneck speed that we are in this place, three time allocation motions in three days in this place, cutting off debate, cutting off democracy. Above and beyond that, the program of this government is wrong as well.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees has moved government notice of motion number 11. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1752 to 1802.

The Acting Speaker: Those in favour will rise one by one until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Eves, Ernie L.
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Hardeman, Ernie
Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Skarica, Toni
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Acting Speaker: Those opposed?

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike

Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David

Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
McLeod, Lyn
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 28.

The Acting Speaker: I declare this motion carried.

This House will stand adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1805.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

CONTENTS

Monday 29 November 1999

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Blair Tully	
Mr Smitherman	879
Bonnie Ledson	
Mr Tilson	879
Northern economy	
Mr Ramsay	879
Municipal restructuring	
Ms Martel	880
DEAL program	
Mr Coburn	880
Health care funding	
Mr Gravelle	880
Christkindl market	
Mr Wettlaufer	881
Doctors' services	
Mr Bartolucci	881
International Year of Older Persons	
Mr O'Toole	881

FIRST READINGS

Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario Act, 1999,	
Bill Pr6, <i>Mr Wood</i>	
Agreed to	882

MOTIONS

House sittings	
Sterling	882
Agreed to	882

SECOND READINGS

Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999,	
Bill 11, <i>Mr Runciman</i>	
Agreed to	882

ORAL QUESTIONS

Montfort Hospital	
Mr McGuinty	882
Mrs Witmer	883
Doctor shortage	
Mr McGuinty	883
Mrs Witmer	883, 886, 889
Mrs McLeod	886
Mr Duncan	889
Mr Hoy	889
Judicial independence	
Mr Hampton	884
Mr Eves	884

Health care funding

Mr Christopherson	885
Mrs Witmer	885
Ms Lankin	885

Biotechnology

Mr Coburn	886
Mr Wilson	886

Hospital restructuring

Mr Conway	887
Mrs Witmer	887

Toronto council

Mr Newman	887
Mr Stockwell	888

Affordable housing

Mr Hampton	888
Mr Eves	888

High school students

Mr Arnott	889
Mrs Ecker	890

Municipal restructuring

Mr Colle	890
Mr Eves	890

Government services

Mr Galt	891
Mr Hodgson	891

Post-secondary education funding

Mr Marchese	891
Mrs Cunningham	891

PETITIONS

Northern health travel grant	
Mrs McLeod	892

Highway safety

Mr Peters	892
-----------------	-----

Workfare

Mr Christopherson	893
-------------------------	-----

Occupational health and safety

Mr Christopherson	893
-------------------------	-----

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Time allocation, government notice of motion number 11, <i>Mr Sterling</i>	
Mr Klees	893
Mr Bradley	895
Mr Gill	899
Mrs Pupatello	900
Mr Galt	901
Mr Parsons	904
Mr Bisson	905
Mr Wettlaufer	912
Ms Di Cocco	914
Mr Martin	914
Agreed to	917

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitor

Mr Duncan	885
-----------------	-----

Hamilton Tiger-Cats

Mr Christopherson	892
-------------------------	-----

Presentation of petitions

Mr Bradley	893
Mr O'Toole	893
Mrs McLeod	893

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 29 novembre 1999

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 visant à réduire les formalités administratives, projet de loi 11, <i>M. Runciman</i>	
Adoptée	882

QUESTIONS ORALES

Hôpital Montfort

M. McGuinty	882
-------------------	-----



No. 20A

N° 20A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 30 November 1999

Mardi 30 novembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

The House met at 1333.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JEANNINE SÉGUIN

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : Vendredi dernier, des centaines de personnes, incluant le député provincial John Cleary, se sont réunies pour dire au revoir et un grand merci à une de leurs plus grandes amies. Jeannine Séguin fut célébrée par ses amis, sa famille et les citoyens et citoyennes de sa communauté et de l'ensemble du pays. Les gens sont venus pour rendre un dernier hommage à une personne qui a tant donné pour promouvoir et améliorer la qualité de la vie de tous les francophones.

Née à Alexandria, Ontario, elle a fait carrière dans le système d'éducation de langue française de cette province pendant 35 ans. L'une des chefs de file de la francophonie ontarienne et canadienne, elle s'est dévouée sans relâche à promouvoir l'égalité des francophones à titre de présidente de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario et de la Fédération des francophones hors Québec. En 1973, elle fut la directrice fondatrice de l'école secondaire La Citadelle de Cornwall.

Récipiendaire de l'Ordre du Canada pour sa contribution exceptionnelle en éducation et pour les droits des francophones, elle fut également une bénévole inépuisable auprès de sa communauté et son église.

Son travail pour les communautés francophones à travers le Canada en entier ne sera jamais oublié. La population entière perd une des plus grandes pionnières des communautés francophones. Son décès laisse un grand vide dans le cœur des résidents et résidentes de toutes les communautés.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Recent tragedies involving young people have caused the people of Ontario to renew their call for tougher penalties to address serious crimes committed by young offenders. Real changes are needed to protect the public, to hold young persons accountable for their actions and to restore public confidence.

The federal government has ignored this issue far too long. Recent changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act do not address many of the serious concerns that have been brought forward by the people of this province over the past decade.

This government has consistently expressed serious concerns about the need to strengthen the Young Offenders Act to deal with violent young offenders so that people can feel safe in their communities. The recent changes contained in the Youth Criminal Justice Act do not go far enough. They do not serve as a serious deterrent to crime.

Most illustrative are the comments of the young who are harassed, terrorized, abused and assaulted by young offenders. Ask the victims and they will confirm that the greatest single measure that can be taken to reduce this menace is to have meaningful changes made by the federal government to the laws that apply to minors.

This government will continue to push Ottawa for changes that will strengthen the new Youth Criminal Justice Act, to lower the age of accountability for serious crimes, to promote parental accountability and to make the punishment fit the crime.

1340

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): A week this Thursday, on December 9, the Legislature will vote on a bill that I hope will get all-party agreement. The short title of the bill is, the Truth about Ipperwash Act. It is An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George. People in Ontario will be aware this happened more than four years ago. It was the first death involving a First Nations person in a land dispute in this century.

There have been serious, serious questions raised about what happened that night and the events leading up to it, with much contradictory evidence of what took place. We will never have closure on this issue until there is a public inquiry. The local township, the local council and many people across Ontario support the call for this public inquiry.

The bill calls for the establishment of an inquiry that will look into the events leading up to the death and will make recommendations to avoid similar instances. Part of the bill says, "The commission may defer beginning

the inquiry if necessary to avoid prejudice to any person who is a party to court proceedings concerning matters which may be a subject of the inquiry."

This is a bill that I think answers any questions about why we can't commit to an inquiry. It will once and for all begin the important process of bringing closure to this tragic event.

ECONOMIC GROWTH IN SCARBOROUGH

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Last week I had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Cedarbrae Mall in my riding. The mall has undergone a multi-million-dollar renovation and expansion over the past few years. The mall has been transformed from an aging plaza to a modern facility.

Cedarbrae is just one example of the economic growth witnessed in Scarborough Centre since 1995. The Scarborough Town Centre, also in my riding, recently completed a \$38-million expansion. The Rainforest Cafe, Famous Players Theatre and Indigo Books now call the Town Centre home. Over 400 construction jobs were created with the expansion and over 900 permanent retail and service jobs have been created by the businesses.

Kennedy Commons Plaza has been built, once again in my riding. Kennedy Commons is home to AMC Theatres, The Brick, Enbridge Consumers Gas and dozens of other businesses. Building the Commons created 350 person-years of construction employment and the businesses have created over a thousand retail and service jobs.

I'm proud to say that thanks to an economy fuelled by tax cuts, Scarborough Centre has done its share in creating the well over 600,000 net new jobs created in Ontario since 1995.

NEIGHBOUR TO NEIGHBOUR CENTRE

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): As the holiday season approaches and we think about those Ontarians less fortunate than ourselves, I want to recognize a unique organization on Hamilton Mountain which, year-round, makes a tremendous contribution to the needs of the community.

The Neighbour to Neighbour Centre was started in 1985 and exists to provide a range of support services to the unemployed, the underemployed and their dependent children. Neighbour to Neighbour provides the residents of Hamilton Mountain and neighbouring communities with self-help resources and emergency food in an environment of dignity and self-worth.

Let me outline the range of services Neighbour to Neighbour provides: 800 families a month receive emergency or supplemental food services; a job-finding club operates at a 79% success rate; a bundle-up program last year distributed over 500 coats to children up to 12 years of age; a Christmas hamper program services 650 households representing 2,300 individuals. Other services

include literacy training, computer access, job listings, a parent support group and a used book store.

Neighbour to Neighbour is an exemplary community-based agency which, in spite of losing all provincial funding support when this government came to power in 1995, continues to provide an invaluable support to those residents of Hamilton Mountain in need. I salute Neighbour to Neighbour and agencies like it. I wish it continued success in its good work. Neighbour to Neighbour passes any audit, particularly the audit of the heart, with flying colours.

NEWMARKET STINGRAYS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to congratulate the Newmarket Stingrays for their outstanding achievements.

The Newmarket Stingrays swimming club was named the gold medal winner as the Maritime Life/Swimming Canada club of the year. The award is given out each year to the most outstanding club, recognizing planning and organization, community service, swimmer development, program delivery and innovation.

The 200-member organization competed at nearly 50 swim meets this year and, despite the small population in the area, its 90 competitive swimmers have held their own against clubs like Calgary and the region of Waterloo.

What makes the Newmarket Stingrays so special is their community involvement. Their members participate in York County Hospital's Circle of Hope, and they have donated approximately \$48,000 in recent years to the hospital's pediatrics department. This and other volunteer work, including swimmer development and participation in the Sears "I Can Swim" program, has set this club apart.

Congratulations to head coach Alan Swanston, president Grace Volkening, and to all of the swimmers and their families on their outstanding achievement in being named the number one swim club in Canada. Well done.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My statement is directed to the Minister of Health. It concerns the deplorable lack of basic health care services in this province.

Last week, I asked the minister a question about Judy Vanderpol, a sole-support mother of three who desperately needs reconstruction surgery for her hip that was replaced 14 years ago. She suffers from serious stomach problems because of the morphine she takes for her pain. Her specialist tells Judy he cannot schedule her surgery until October 30, 2000. That is totally unacceptable.

Hearing nothing from the minister's office after my question last week, my office called the ministry directly to see what help the ministry would give to shorten the unacceptable wait for Judy Vanderpol. A medical con-

sultant from your ministry said, "We don't get involved in that." He said it was up to the specialist to try to find an earlier hospital date, but he is unable to do that. Or he could file for prior approval to send Judy out of the province for treatment.

Is that the choice facing patients in Ontario's abysmal health care system: Wait and suffer for almost a year, or go to the United States?

I'm sending this problem over to the Minister of Health, because she is the minister and it is her problem. Your cuts have created this nightmare for Judy, and you have to get involved to fix it and fix it now.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I rise today to discuss the report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on local government reform for Hamilton-Wentworth and to draw to the attention of the minister one of the serious problems I have with this recommendation. I give these remarks in the context of being one who supports one tier; I was prepared to support the Church accord. In fact, most of my colleagues don't agree, but given that it is a local issue, I feel strongly about this.

I want to point out that there are serious problems with the labour part of this—I don't know why the Minister of Community and Social Services finds this so funny. The headline in the Hamilton Spectator yesterday says, "Labour Leaders Threaten Work Action." If the Minister of Community and Social Services thinks this is something to laugh about, then go ahead, but I would suggest to him that we take it very seriously. And I would point out that at least three of the areas where there are labour recommendations that take away serious fundamental rights that workers have in Hamilton-Wentworth could easily apply to the other communities that are involved in restructuring in terms of Sudbury, Ottawa and Haldimand-Norfolk: literally thousands of people whose rights could be taken away.

Minister, remove these offensive recommendations from your legislation or look to serious action on the part of labour leaders, as well as losing my vote, which I do want to give to support one tier in Hamilton.

ALLAN BAKER

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Today I'd like to share a story with you. This is a story of hard work and dedication, a story of love of mechanics. This is the story of Allan Baker.

Born one of six boys and raised on a farm in Dummer township in Peterborough county, he developed an interest in mechanics at an early age, and it became such a strong passion that he still has it to this very day.

In 1953, along with his wife, Jean, he started his own business. He started out by repairing and maintaining the local milk trucks, but he didn't stop there; he repaired everything from farm machinery to buses. Over 45 years

his business even employed members of his own family. I'm sure his wife and three children, Dianne, Bob and Linda, have many stories to tell of their own.

1350

Mr Baker is also dedicated to his community. He is a devoted member of the Norwood Lions Club, and he is proud to say that he has missed only one Norwood Fall Fair in the last 70 years.

In 1998, Mr Baker closed his business. His tools may have been sold, but the love for his work still hasn't faded. In fact, it has been said that he even carries a few tools around with him in his jacket just in case he can lend a hand.

Mr Baker is a living example of the hard work and good business sense that this government has always been proud to encourage and to support. He is a man who has dedicated his life to the farm community. Allan Baker was recently awarded recognition by the Peterborough County Federation of Agriculture. It gives me great pride to recognize his contribution and to share it with you all today.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mrs Witmer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Minister, for a short explanation.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The legislation I am introducing today, if passed, will provide added flexibility for Ontario hospitals as they restructure and build improved health care facilities to better meet the needs of their growing and changing population.

The proposed changes respond to requests from Ontario hospitals and the Ontario Hospital Association. If passed, this legislation will ensure that hospitals have the time they need to implement their restructuring projects.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): We are pleased to provide the Legislature and the people of Ontario with a report on the state of the province's finances and economy.

During the first half of this decade Ontario lost jobs, investment, confidence and hope. As we approach the new millennium, we see a tremendous improvement in economic growth, job creation and fiscal accountability in government. Our active agenda of tax cuts and sound economic and fiscal management has put Ontario back on track.

We are laying the groundwork for sustained economic growth. Ontario's economy is growing faster than the rest of Canada or any of the G7 industrialized countries. Investment and spending by households and the private sector are surging. Confidence is high. Strong employment creation is replacing job stagnation. Most of the growth is in full-time private sector jobs.

With continued vigilance, we are on track to balance the budget by the fiscal year 2000-01 and to begin paying down the massive debt that is the legacy of the tax-and-spend policies of previous governments. We have reversed the steady increase in taxes. We now have the lowest general personal income tax rate in the country.

In the 1999 budget in May, we noted that the outlook for continued job growth and prosperity was bright. We are very pleased to report today that Ontario's performance and prospects are even stronger than we had anticipated earlier this year.

Tax cuts, careful spending and removal of barriers to growth are creating an economic climate that is restoring business and consumer confidence, spending and investment in Ontario.

The result is that Ontario's economy is expanding at a vigorous pace this year. Real GDP rose by more than previously expected at annualized rates of 5.2% in the first quarter and 5% in the second quarter of 1999 fiscal year. So far this year retail sales are up 7.3%, housing starts are up 24.3% and exports have grown by 16.2%.

The May 1999 budget was based on projections of Ontario real GDP growth of 3.7% in 1999. Based on the economy's performance so far this year, we, along with the private sector, are projecting that Ontario is on pace for growth of 5% this year.

The consensus among private sector forecasters is that Ontario's economy will grow more rapidly than the economies of any of the G7 countries in 2000 as well. All private sector forecasters also expect Ontario to register stronger economic growth than the rest of Canada this year and next.

The people of Ontario can now see that the hard work and sacrifice of five years are paying off. The outlook shows that the policies that they endorsed, the policies

that were needed, policies of lower taxes and economic growth based on private sector investment and job creation, are working.

For all Ontarians, the most compelling economic issue is creating and keeping good jobs. Tax cuts have fuelled vigorous job growth in Ontario. In the first half of this decade, Ontario consistently underperformed the rest of the country. From January 1990 to September 1995, Ontario lost nearly 50,000 jobs, while the rest of Canada gained 350,000 jobs.

Since mid-1995, Ontario's job growth has consistently outperformed the rest of the country. Most importantly, the increase has been in the private sector. The jobs have been full-time. Ontarians of all ages, including our young people, have benefited from this growth. Ontario's youth unemployment rate, while still too high, has fallen to 12.7%. The overall unemployment rate has fallen to a new low of 6%.

Since September 1995, Ontario has gained 615,000 new jobs, nearly all of them full-time jobs in the private sector. These represent over half of all private sector jobs created in Canada. So far this year, 177,000 Ontarians have found jobs, virtually all of them full-time. This is roughly equivalent to the combined populations of Chatham-Kent and Sault Ste Marie finding full-time jobs. Job growth is estimated to be 3.1% this year, and we are well on our way to our goal of creating 725,000 jobs by the end of the year 2000.

As the Ontario experience demonstrates, low tax rates are critical for economic growth. As well, they enhance economic competitiveness. As announced in the 1999 budget, a business tax review panel is being formed in order to examine the current Ontario personal, corporate and property tax systems for their impact on the capacity of business, both small and large, to create jobs. Advice by this committee will guide us as we prepare Ontario's budget for the year 2000 and the years ahead.

In an open, global economy, jobs and investment find new homes quickly and easily. High taxes scare away new investment and jobs. They raise the costs of producing goods and services. They act as a drag on our economy. They depress job creation and prosperity.

1400

Although Ontario and most other provinces have been steadily reducing taxes, Canadians as a whole still face a higher personal income tax burden than citizens of any other nation in the G7.

The provinces cannot make the tax system competitive on their own. Most of the personal income tax burden in Canada, over 60%, is imposed by the federal government. The federal government can and should create jobs and strengthen the national economy by cutting taxes. Premier Harris and I have stressed that the federal government should cut taxes in the next federal budget.

I was pleased to host my provincial and territorial counterparts earlier this month. Every single finance minister from every province and the territories agreed that federal tax cuts should happen immediately, that full restoration of the Canada health and social transfer

should happen now and that they should be priorities for the federal government.

They also called for a reduction in the job-killing federal Employment Insurance premiums. As the surplus in the EI account continues to balloon, standing at about \$26 billion today and rising to about \$31 billion or more by the year 2000, Ottawa is missing the opportunity to offset scheduled rate increases for CPP with EI rate cuts.

The federal government actually increased job-killing payroll taxes in 1999 and will do so in the year 2000 as well. These increases in federal payroll taxes next year will cost Ontario employers and workers alone over \$560 million and will cost the province as many as 22,500 jobs. This is based on a paper issued by the C.D. Howe Institute, which estimates that every \$1 billion increase in payroll taxes results in a loss of 40,000 jobs.

It is time for the federal government to do its share. As we approach 2000, we call upon the federal government to show respect for the equal and evolving nature of Canadian federalism and to show flexibility in its understanding of our respective roles in this federation we call Canada.

The federal government has required that provincial personal income tax systems use the federal definition of taxable income. This limits the flexibility of all provinces in designing tax systems to meet the specific needs of their taxpayers. Ontario is no longer willing to accept federally imposed constraints from an earlier era of federal dominance in federal-provincial relations.

Ontario will be moving to a "tax on income" system in which Ontario's personal income tax will no longer be linked to the federal tax and subject to hidden tax increases of the federal system. A "tax on income" system would preserve the benefits Ontario taxpayers have gained from government tax cuts, as we embark on this course with the expectation that provinces will have the same flexibility as the federal government currently possesses over the personal income tax system of each.

The federal government must also restore CHST funding to 1994-95 levels immediately. Ottawa slashed \$6.2 billion a year from provincial transfers for health and social programs, and so far has only restored \$2 billion of the \$6.2 billion. We call upon Ottawa to return the rest of this funding to provinces in the year 2000, including an appropriate escalator clause for these cash transfers that keeps pace with future cost pressures and inflation.

Ontario's strong economic and job growth is continuing to propel gains in government revenue. While we have been cutting tax rates, our revenues have been rising. They will be an estimated \$59.1 billion this year, up from \$49.5 billion in 1995-96. Perhaps that will answer the criticism of some members opposite who projected that we would lose \$5 billion a year, not gain \$9.6 billion a year.

For this fiscal year, we are delighted to report that we are once again on track to exceed our target for deficit reduction. Based on the second-quarter Ontario finances, which are being released today, this year's fiscal deficit

is now projected at \$1 billion, down \$1.1 billion from the 1999 budget plan.

We can and do look forward to introducing a balanced budget for 2000-01 next spring, an excellent way to launch the new century. Furthermore, we will ensure that the budget remains balanced. The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act, 1999, approved by the Legislature last week, will prevent Ontario governments from raising taxes in the future without the express permission of the people of Ontario, and will prohibit governments from incurring deficits except in extraordinary circumstances. It is imperative that we not revert to the tax-and-spend habits of previous governments once the deficit is eliminated.

Even when the budget is balanced, we will continue to safeguard taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. We will start paying down the debt, beginning with a minimum \$2-billion repayment during our current mandate. The legacy we inherited from previous governments was debt, over \$101 billion of it. Our legacy to future generations is a province that is on sound fiscal footing, with a plan to keep it there.

Successful businesses review their operations continuously, looking for ways to find efficiencies, to improve the products and services they deliver to their customers, and effective governments do exactly the same. We promised that under our government existing programs would all be reviewed and justified on the basis of cost, necessity and efficiency, and we are continuing to do this.

As announced in the 1999 budget, the Ontario Financial Review Commission will be reconvened to assist the government as we continue to strengthen fiscal management and public accountability. A blue-ribbon panel will be appointed and will provide recommendations to improve the fiscal management and accountability of key public-sector organizations such as hospitals, universities, colleges and municipalities. We are ever vigilant in our efforts to ensure taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely. We are making government work better by managing spending on programs and on compensation.

As my colleague the Chair of Management Board recently noted, the province has reached collective agreements with its employees that are reasonable and fiscally responsible. Ontario's broader public sector, such as municipalities, boards of education, post-secondary institutions and the health care sector, should do the same.

In a competitive world economy where markets change with lightning speed, we cannot rest on our laurels and assume that the battle is over. We need to keep an eye on the future, while making the right investments today to sustain our economic competitiveness.

Earlier this year, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board presented our government with an economic road map for jobs and economic prosperity. We will be following this direction to make the strategic investments that will promote new technology, innovation and skills

development, and enhance our competitiveness now and into the future.

The actions the government has taken to date, and the actions we will continue to take, are not quick fixes. They have not always been the easiest choices. But our economic and fiscal record of success, together with the brighter outlook of our economic future, demonstrates that they are the right choices. Our policies are working. The outlook for Ontario's strong and growing economy is very positive.

Our government's agenda is motivated by our goal of ensuring that the people of Ontario have the opportunity to access good jobs, quality health care, first-class education services and a prosperous future. We will not waiver from this agenda or from the often difficult decisions required to implement it.

By continuing on the path of sound fiscal and economic management, we are laying the foundation for prosperity and quality of life that will benefit all Ontarians for many generations to come.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to begin the debate on the government's fiscal and economic outline. I start by looking at the government's record on debt, where we can see that since Premier Harris became Premier, the debt of the province, and these are the government's own numbers, has gone up by \$22 billion—25%. These are the government's own numbers.

1410

I would also point out that virtually every other province in this country now has a balanced budget. When Premier Harris became Premier, the federal government and Quebec had substantial deficits. The federal government balanced their budget three years in advance of Mike Harris. Quebec balanced their budget two years ahead of Mike Harris.

Mike Harris, in the analogy I have in my mind, is prancing along, waving to the crowd. Bouchard runs by him, Chrétien runs by him and they balance the budget. They have been paying down the debt of the provinces.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I know you don't like to hear this. I would just ask us to take a look at the credit rating agencies. They look at the way Mike Harris manages the finances of Ontario. What has happened to the credit rating agencies—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, member. Stop the clock. I cannot hear the response coming from the member.

Member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Phillips: I go back to the independent bodies that rate credit worthiness. They downgraded Bob Rae three times. Mike Harris was mad about that. Mike Harris has been Premier now for four and a half years, heading to five years: the same credit rating. Why? Because you have mismanaged the finances of the province. That is what they're saying. Hydro played games with the books. Now they're on our own books.

One of the most important pages in this document is page 22. What it says here is that exports now account for 51.9%—almost 52%—of Ontario's economy. It was about a quarter of Ontario's economy; it's now 52%. I think it's important, when Ontario looks at our economy, that we recognize why we have been growing strongly. It is because of exports virtually doubling.

While Mike Harris is patting himself on the back, I really think he should be patting Bill Clinton on the back. The reason I raise this is, let's recognize what is driving Ontario's economy. It is exports; there's no question. The minister himself said 52% exports.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Stop the clock. Minister of Finance, please come to order so I can hear the response.

Mr Phillips: The reason I think it's important is this: On Friday, Palladini sent us all a letter saying: Why are people investing in Ontario? It is for these reasons. These are the people who are driving our exports.

Here's what Mr Palladini's letter to us said: It's because of "first-class education" in Ontario that is "highly affordable and accessible." What is Mike Harris doing? He has taken tuitions from 20% of the cost to 35% of the cost now. No longer is it highly accessible and affordable.

It goes on to say here: "A typical company operating in Ontario might find its employee benefits bill slashed to one sixth of what it'd pay south of the border." This is Al Palladini's letter to us on Friday. What is Mike Harris doing? He's systematically moving to a two-tiered system where people pay for their health care costs, not by all of us sharing the burden but paying for it—if you can afford it—out of your own pocket; if you can't afford it, too bad. I would say that one of the most important pages in this document, for all of Ontario to recognize, is that what is driving Ontario's economy is exports.

You're undermining by your own definition the major reason why companies want to invest in Ontario, like a quality health care program. "Save Civilized Society" is the big heading here. "Ontario's outstanding quality of life"—they talk about the quality of life in our urban areas. "Our civil society"—what's Mike Harris doing? He's undermining the very thing that is driving Ontario's economy, and that is our exports.

I go on. The minister misspoke himself. He said that Ontario is now at an all-time low in unemployment. The fact is that this is the document he sent out to us two weeks ago. In the late 1980s, Ontario's unemployment rate was 5%. You misspoke yourself, Minister. You may want to correct the record a little bit later.

I would also say on the job front that we are looking forward to the government delivering on its commitment for 825,000 jobs. The minister never mentioned that today, but that was in the Blueprint.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Yes, he did. You didn't listen.

Mr Phillips: Oh, I did listen. He never mentioned 825,000 jobs. You're using the old promises. You're

looking at some new promises now you're going to have to live with.

While you are touting the accomplishments of Ontario, it is on the backs of our most vulnerable and it is as a result of exports, not what you did.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The member for Sudbury, come to order, please.

Responses.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Let me begin by congratulating the Minister of Finance on the hyperbole of his spin. He would have us believe that because he gave 6% or 7% of the highest-income people in the province a tax cut, everything else has flowed from heaven. The reality is in a study of the auto industry that was just released today. It's a study which shows that we are now going to surpass Michigan in the production of automobiles. But nowhere—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: But nowhere in the study does it mention the government's tax cut. They point out that Ontario is going to surpass Michigan in the production of automobiles not because of some phony tax cut; what they point out is Ontario is moving ahead because our currency is so much lower vis-à-vis the American currency and because health care costs—medicare—are so much cheaper than that American system of health care that you're trying to emulate.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. I would ask the government benches to come to order so I can hear the response, please. Leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I know the Conservatives don't want to hear this. When anyone does an analysis of what has become the number one industry in Ontario, they don't want to hear that that industry has grown not because of any phony tax cut. In fact, they don't even mention your phony tax cut. What they mention is the low value of the Canadian dollar. What they mention is the efficiency of a medicare system that you're tearing apart. What they also mention is that 90% of the automobiles produced are exported.

What it means is what this government doesn't want to admit: It's exports that drive the Ontario economy. Once again, your phony tax cut has got nothing to do with it.

The person we should be thanking is not the Minister of Finance over here, but Alan Greenspan and Bill Clinton for allowing the American economy to hum and allowing them to import our automobiles, our trucks, our buses, our trains, our transit equipment, our computer equipment, our pulp, our paper and our lumber. But no, this government wants to go on with this fantasy.

1420

The fantasy is further exposed when you look at the opinion research that was done earlier this fall which

shows that 75% of the people in Ontario don't feel they have had a tax cut. Lower-income people know that they haven't had a tax cut. Middle-income people know they haven't had a tax cut. Modest-income people know that they haven't had a tax cut. If anything, those people are now paying the higher tuition fees, the motor vehicle registration fees, the higher property taxes, the family responsibility taxes, the public guardian and trustee taxes and the new property assessment fees. That's the reality of what you've done. You've given the wealthiest 6% a tax cut. You've hit everybody else with a tax increase. You're lucky enough to live at a time when the American economy is functioning.

What I really want to say to the Minister of Finance, though, is this: You failed to mention the health deficit, the education deficit, the environmental deficit and the social deficit you are leaving behind, and it's those deficits which hurt the prospects of the majority of people in this province.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I would also point out to the minister that page 55 of his own document that he has tabled here today shows that the outlook of personal income tax revenue projections, as opposed to the 1998-99 actuals, shows that you're going to collect over \$1 billion less in personal income tax. That's your rich friends getting wealthier because of your tax cuts. When you look across our communities, what are the vast majority of citizens facing? Cuts to their education system, cuts to the hospital system, cuts to our environmental protection laws, cuts to our labour laws and the inspectors who are there to enforce all those laws.

Minister, your friends are doing great in your wonderful little world; it's everybody else who is getting screwed.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member to withdraw the last word, please.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw it, Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Minister, on June 6, 1996, you told this House that you had just learned of allegations of abuse at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. We know that a phone call was received in your office three months before that date from the mother of a young offender at Elgin-Middlesex, and she was concerned about her son's safety.

In recent weeks, we've been told that the staff in your office tried to hide the fact that a call had been made to your office. Today there is new evidence that your office tried to have the documents changed to cover up the fact

that that call did in fact come to your office. There are voice mail records now that back up those who say that there were changes to those documents ordered by your office.

My question for the minister is this: Given the new information that is now available in the public, we'd like to know what you believe your course of action should be.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I refer this to the Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): As the member opposite would know, the matter she is raising today is before a quasi-judicial board and it would be totally inappropriate to comment on the specifics that are before that panel. I think that has been the position that has been raised by members opposite on a number of occasions.

I think the member should be aware of, and I would have thought she would have been concerned about, what we have done to deal with the young offender institutions and our involvement with young offenders in this province as a result of the numerous inquiries into that particular incident. We have taken action. I would have thought the member would have wanted to know whether we have appropriately trained corrections officers to deal with young offender situations. I would have thought the member would have wanted to know whether or not we were prepared to implement different correctional policies for people who are attending those institutions.

I would have thought the member would have wanted to know whether or not we have attempted to deal with how we deal with emergency situations in our institutions in general. I would have thought those would have been the questions the member would have posed in this House.

Mrs Pupatello: I'll tell you what the public wants to know. The public wants to know, who is defending their interests today? We want to know why, on April 26—I'm going to quote this same minister who I directed the question to and who I expect to answer the supplement. He said in this House: "I can indicate clearly that there was no undue interference from the minister's office with respect to this whole matter." That's the quote by the minister that I would like to answer today.

Today we have information through the media that voice mail records confirm that this same minister's executive assistant knew, approached correctional officers about changing documents. The evidence is mounting, the evidence is damning, the evidence seems clear. What we know is that this happened on this minister's watch. What we know now is that he should do the right thing. We are asking this minister to answer, this minister to step aside until this investigation which should be launched into his office is over.

Hon Mr Sampson: For the record—and I think the honourable member understands that this is the record but I'll clarify it for her—the former minister, the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services,

indicated to this House over three years ago that he first became aware of the incident at Elgin-Middlesex in June 1996. That is on the record.

Minister Runciman, I think the House would agree, has the utmost integrity in this House. In fact, a member of your party agreed with that comment because they said at that time that they accepted Mr Runciman's statement as that being the fact.

Mrs Pupatello: Let me tell the minister that I would like to answer this final supplementary on this, that the bar has been set by your colleague, and that was Jim Wilson, then Minister of Health.

Here is what he said in this House. When he stepped down because of the behaviour of a staffer, he said, "I hope I've set a precedent that when there are questions of impropriety by staff members, of ministers themselves, that they fully step aside and allow an independent third body to look at this."

That is the precedent. That is the integrity. That is the integrity that you are speaking of where this minister is concerned, that as a matter of his integrity, as a matter of the precedent that has been set by that same cabinet colleague when he stepped aside because of the behaviour in that minister's office, we are asking you today, in light of the evidence that is mounting—records by the assistant deputy minister at the time, that the minister's office was fully informed; records today—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Member's time is up. Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon Mr Sampson: The member knows this issue is before the grievance settlement board. Unfortunately, yet again, the opposition is dredging up old stories and allegations that, frankly, serve no purpose in this House, and not focusing on the real issue of the day, which is how young offenders are treated in institutions across this province; not dealing with the fundamental policies as to how we deal with the very serious challenge in this province of properly providing security and custody and treatment services to young offenders in this province.

It's not prepared to deal with the fact that there's a tremendous challenge in this province to make sure that we have young offenders who come out of the system and are properly rehabilitated so that they don't reoffend, so that they don't create yet other victims.

These are the policy issues, I say to the member opposite, who I hope is listening. These are the policy issues that we are taking forward to the people of Ontario. These are the policy issues that are important to Ontarians, how we deal with young offenders, youth justice and criminal activity in this province.

These are the issues that we should be debating in this House and not old stories and not old allegations that you continually want to raise in this House for your own political advantage.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Minister, your special adviser for municipal restructuring in Sudbury has done the job you have asked him to do. Now it's time that your government put its resources behind his plan. When you forced amalgamation on Toronto, you gave Toronto a \$50-million grant, plus \$200 million in interest-free money. When Chatham and its surrounding municipalities amalgamated, you gave them \$22 million to cover the cost of restructuring. The citizens of Sudbury deserve no less.

1430

Restructuring in Sudbury is estimated to cost between \$12 million and \$14 million. It must be your government that picks up the cost of municipal restructuring. The citizens of the new greater city of Sudbury cannot be saddled with a \$12-million to \$14-million debt. Will you commit today in the House to the citizens of Sudbury that you will pick up the entire cost of amalgamation in the greater city of Sudbury?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. I take it from his comments that he is supportive of the report, and thank him very much for that support.

We are in the process of reviewing a very complex report which had quite an interesting series of recommendations, including the fact that the citizens in the new, amalgamated greater Sudbury would see taxpayer savings of around \$14 million annually. I believe this is good news for citizens in the Sudbury area as well.

The honourable member raises a point about transitional costs. Indeed there are transitional costs, and I certainly will take his comments under advisement as we seek to respond to the report.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): To the same minister: Let me make it clear on this side of the House that you will not get a clear commitment of support on this bill until you address our issues in regard to restructuring funding and the costs to those municipalities. So you can put that assumption aside.

Let us tell you again: The same situation applies to my community of Hamilton-Wentworth. Minister, we have clearly seen the fashion in which you treated Toronto regarding restructuring costs. We've seen that you treated Chatham-Kent, with a population of 110,000, to \$22 million. The recommendation for Ottawa-Carleton is in excess of \$50 million. However, the recommendation for Hamilton is only a \$10-million loan. That is not acceptable. That does not cover the cost. We estimate the cost, based on this formula and the formula you have used, to be in excess of \$50 million.

Will you outline to us clearly today how you address that issue, and will you commit today that Hamilton-Wentworth will get every single cent it needs in regard to restructuring costs up to the \$50-million formula that is in front of us?

Hon Mr Clement: I am detecting a trend in the questions, and I thank the honourable member for his commentary with respect to the special adviser's report

for Hamilton-Wentworth. I'll certainly take his views under advisement.

We are always looking for ways to save the taxpayer money and to deliver better services for less. This is not only a challenge for us at the provincial level; it is a challenge that our municipal counterparts also have. We are looking at proposals that would deal with that, that would create a more efficient level of government, more transparency for the taxpayer and more accountability to the taxpayer.

It looks like at least this honourable member is on the same side, and I welcome his views to get to a better deal for the taxpayers. The policies he ran on in the election certainly did not guarantee that. Maybe he's had a change of heart since the election.

Mr Agostino: To the same minister: Let me tell you again that you will not get a commitment from this side of the House until we get a commitment from you that you will give money to Hamilton to the tune of \$50 million to deal with restructuring.

I want to ask the minister about the betrayal of one of your members, the betrayal by the Premier of the member from Wentworth-Burlington. Yesterday we asked the finance minister in the House about comments made by the Premier reassuring the member, Mr Skarica, that he would not bring in one-tier enforced restructuring. The Minister of Finance said yesterday that he knew of no such commitment that had been made to him.

Let me tell you what the member from Stoney Creek says today. He said he was baffled by Eves's statement to the Legislature. He said Skarica personally assured him before the election that those assurances were from the Premier and the party. He also said it's possible that Eves does not know or he forgot. Could I ask you who is right? Is it Mr Eves, the Premier or Mr Skarica, or is Mr Clark wrong? Who committed to whom? Did the Premier commit to Mr Skarica that he would not bring in one tier in Hamilton-Wentworth?

The Speaker: Sorry, the member's time.

Hon Mr Clement: There were quite a few questions in that supplementary, so let me provide the House with this information. Certainly we are looking for ways to give the taxpayer a break. The one thing that I found quite curious in the honourable member's remarks was the fact that he was willing to oppose any proposal to give the taxpayer a break unless he got his way on another issue. I would think that his party would want to be the party of principle. Maybe I'm wrong on that as well; maybe they're taking a new tack—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, take a seat. I cannot hear the minister's response. I need to hear the minister's response. The member for Windsor West, please come to order. Member for Hamilton East, please come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: We, on this side of the House, welcome support from the opposition when it comes to giving the taxpayers a break. I ask the honourable member this question: If he is in favour of doing so, why

not support all of our initiatives in this regard? The finance minister has made it clear that this is our priority. We would love to have their support on this side of the House. For the taxpayers, we welcome it.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, you're playing a callous game with the lives of cancer patients and their families. I've obtained confidential documents that show your ministry is asking Princess Margaret Hospital to put itself in a position of being sued. You're asking Princess Margaret to accept changes to the referral process and put patients on their list that don't have any hope of being treated within the four-week recommended time period.

You want to move people off the holding list and onto a list whose only purpose is to politically manage the waiting period and do absolutely nothing about reducing the waiting time. Your demands have forced the hospital to seek legal advice. I have obtained a copy of the legal opinion from Borden and Elliot, and it makes it clear that you are putting Princess Margaret in a position of being sued.

Minister, why are you forcing hospitals to bend over backwards to avoid lawsuits when the real issue is the lack of resources that you're prepared to put into reducing cancer waiting time?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member full well knows, we actually have invested over \$155 million in cancer services since 1995. In fact, we were the ones who set up Cancer Care Ontario in order to ensure that all people throughout the province would have access to cancer services. We have also made a commitment, as the member understands and knows, to reduce the waiting time for cancer radiology patients. We also are expanding access to cancer facilities throughout Ontario.

We have announced that we will be building new facilities closer to home in the communities of Mississauga, Durham, Waterloo, St Catharines and Sault Ste Marie. We actually have taken significant steps and invested \$155 million to do all we can for cancer patients.

Ms Lankin: Minister, what you're doing is asking Princess Margaret to join with you in a shell game. You're asking them to take patients off the holding list and to put them on their waiting list for treatment when they have no hope of being treated within the safe time frame. The hospital has got a legal opinion. It says they could be open to being sued for lack of duty of care.

Minister, you have created this situation. The hospital is about to send out a draft letter—they're considering it at the oncology committee meeting today—that will make clear to patients this waiting game of yours, and it will say, "Delays of this length are well beyond the recommended time frame after diagnosis."

They don't want to play this cynical, callous game of manipulation. They don't want to open themselves up to a lawsuit from patients who you are looking at manipulating, who you are looking at politically managing instead of treating.

Will you take responsibility for this and withdraw your request from Princess Margaret to play this political shell game?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Cancer Care Ontario, which was created in 1997 in order to ensure that all people in this province had equal access to cancer services is the agency that coordinates standards and guidelines for the treatment of patients requiring cancer services. I know that agency is doing all it can to ensure that high-quality services are provided to the people in this province.

As I said, we have invested an additional \$155 million to respond to the needs of cancer patients.

1440

Ms Lankin: Minister, don't try and push this off on someone else. Listen to this, please. Let me read this to you, very clearly:

"If the University Health Network were to accept the changes to the re-referral process requested by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, patients re-referred to the Princess Margaret Hospital would be registered on a list by the PMH at the PMH.... My concern is that such a patient may be led to believe that he or she is being attended to in a proper and timely fashion as he or she is in the care of Princess Margaret, a renowned cancer treatment centre."

It goes on to say they can't give that treatment in a timely fashion; they don't want to be part of your game to fool patients; they don't want to open up themselves to the risk of a lawsuit.

Take responsibility, please, today. Assure us that you will withdraw this request, these pressure tactics to manipulate patients, and just get on with addressing the real problem in terms of the waiting list.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member perhaps doesn't understand, but since December 1998, within the past year, we have provided an additional \$5.8 million through Cancer Care Ontario to the University Health Network and to Princess Margaret Hospital for equipment upgrades, which I understand will result in the treatment of more than 700 patients.

SPORTS FACILITY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Deputy Premier, and it's a further question about his plans for tax subsidies for NHL hockey millionaires. You've refused public hearings on your property tax subsidy scheme for NHL hockey millionaires, and you've refused public hearings because you don't want people to know about this.

But my question today is about another scheme. The Ottawa Senators want you to classify them as a charity for the purpose of their home games so they won't have to pay entertainment tax of \$3.5 million a year—a

completely cynical scheme to declare them a charity so they could avoid paying a tax that every other entertainment provider pays.

Minister, tell us today that you will not get involved in this cynical tax subsidy scheme and that you will reject their request to be classified as a charity for the purposes of their home hockey games.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): First of all, the leader of the third party will know that charities are registered and get their registration number from the federal government, not from the provincial government. So we don't have the power to do what he's suggesting even if we wanted to.

Second of all, there has been an issue, as he knows, in the media etc with respect to payment or non-payment of RST. I want to be perfectly clear. I think that every corporation that should pay entertainment tax, provincial sales tax, whatever, should meet their obligations and pay it. I'm not considering any exceptions to that rule.

Mr Hampton: Minister, you know very well that the owner of the Ottawa Senators has this cynical game in mind. You know very well that they've put forward a scheme to have their home 40 games treated as charity events. I would think, Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, that in the interests of fairness you would want to step forward and say very clearly, very publicly, that Ontario is absolutely opposed to this.

At a time when we obviously don't have enough money for cancer patients, when you're promoting hall-way medicine in our hospitals, when you're thinking about taking more money out of schools, I would think you'd be on your feet saying that Ontario is not going to play any part in this, that Ontario is absolutely opposed to it, and saying to the federal Liberals in Ottawa that they ought not to take any role in this too. Will you do that, Deputy Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: I guess the member just can't take yes or, in this case, no for an answer. We are not considering making any changes as to who should pay entertainment tax, what is a charitable organization and what isn't in the province of Ontario. I just gave you the answer you wanted twice now.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. When the Provincial Auditor released his annual report two weeks ago, he confirmed that your government was risking public safety and costing taxpayers more in its relentless bid to privatize road maintenance work across the province. You responded unbelievably with the claim that the Provincial Auditor was wrong. Minister, I can assure you that the auditor is more than prepared to prove that he is right and you are terribly wrong when he appears before the public accounts committee, which will be investigating this important matter at its first opportunity.

But winter is already upon us. It hit northwestern Ontario last week, southern and southwestern Ontario yesterday and today. The need for public safety obligates you to guarantee that your determination to privatize this vital government service does not put people's lives in further peril on the road.

My question is, will you put aside your misguided disagreement with the auditor and impose a moratorium on any further privatizations of road maintenance for the sake of public safety?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): It's interesting. I think you should get your information from listening to answers in this House as opposed to reading the Toronto Star. There's no disagreement with the auditor. The fact is that safety is our number one priority and public safety has in no way been compromised. In point of fact, maintenance contracts specifically require adherence to traditional maintenance standards. These maintenance standards are monitored and there are significant penalties for any outside organization which does not adhere to them.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, I can assure you the auditor himself is very upset about you accusing him of being wrong and he looks forward to the opportunity. Yes, he is.

It's vital that you acknowledge that not only is your privatization of road maintenance not saving taxpayers any money but that it has put the public at risk. To make it worse, you have lowered your own ministry standards for maintenance in order to achieve those phantom savings. In other words, we have increased costs and less maintenance.

Just 10 days ago, municipal truck sanders from Schreiber and Terrace Bay in my riding were called out by emergency crews after a freezing rainstorm because your ministry crews didn't get there in time, which begs the question, do you even have the equipment you need to do the job, and why have the number of road closures increased since your standards were lowered?

The mayor of Terrace Bay, Mike King, expressed the feelings of many of us when he said last week, "I've lived here 25 years and I truly believe the frequency of road closures is a result of cutbacks and contracting out."

My question is, will you back off from this dangerous approach you're taking, or perhaps more to the point, in light of your wild sell-off of ministry equipment, can you?

Hon Mr Turnbull: Interesting question. The fact is the particular area that you're speaking about hasn't been given to the private sector. The fact is there has been no change to the safety standards or the maintenance standards and we strictly adhere to them.

The fact is that in this province we have snow, we have ice. It happens every year. Believe it or not, we had snow and we had ice when you were the government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister take his seat. Order.

Minister.

Hon Mr Turnbull: The same maintenance standards apply as have always applied and they are strictly adhered to. It is important that everybody in this province take steps to get their automobiles ready for serious weather in the winter. We understand the importance of good roads in this province. That's why we're putting more money into our roads than you ever—

The Speaker: Order. New question.

1450

ONTARIO PLACE

Mr David Young (Willowdale): My question is for the Minister of Tourism. The Toronto Star reported last Saturday, and again this day, that attendance is down at Ontario Place over the past year. Ontario Place, as you are well aware, has been an important part of Toronto's waterfront for the past 25 years, and the park, although it has continued to evolve over that period of time, has always been there as a constant for the people of Toronto, for the people of Ontario and for the many visitors from around the world who have come to our fair city. The Star suggests that the management of Ontario Place and the board are to blame for the drop in attendance.

My question to you is, do you agree? If so, what actions are you and your ministry going to take to correct this?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): First of all, I'd like to thank the member for his question and indicate that tourism and the number of tourists who have come to Ontario has increased in the last couple of years under the leadership of our government. However, tourism in the city of Toronto has actually declined, and this is a serious concern.

What the Toronto Star failed to report was that we've experienced declines at the CNE, at the Metro Zoo, at Ontario Place, at the ROM, virtually across the board in the city of Toronto. It has actually been a decline of about 17.5% over the last few years. On the one hand, it has increased for the province, but it has declined in Toronto.

The facts at Ontario Place are very clear, and this was not reported in the Toronto Star, and that is that in 1991-92 Ontario Place was given away to the citizens of Ontario with a free admission. The revenue was \$13.4 million, but the grants from the subsidy from the province—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr Young: While I'm sure that my constituents are pleased about the reduction in taxpayer dollars to subsidize Ontario Place—I am sure of that by reason of the fact that the people of Willowdale and the people of this province, both in June of 1995 and in June of this very year, sent a very clear message, a message that they wanted, they demanded that Queen's Park would eliminate subsidies where it was reasonable to do so and where there was an alternative form of funding.

Toronto, as you are well aware, is a world-class city in which there are hundreds of thousands of tourists that come each and every year. As a result of that, we have great revenue in our city and in our province. My question is, what steps are being taken to improve the sales and marketing of this city, not only Ontario Place but all the great attractions that we have here?

Hon Mr Jackson: Many of the attractions in Ontario are moving to a greater emphasis on marketing and sales promotion. In fact, the ROM has restructured in the last year. They've already seen some new attractions coming to the city of Toronto.

We know that Ontario Place—and I support the board in their decision to reorganize their senior management team, to bring in additional expertise in sales and marketing, which is what this attraction requires. We have a new private sector general manager coming into place by the end of this year.

These are all positive signals, and they complement the fact that this is the first government in Ontario's history that has dedicated \$120 million solely to marketing tourism for the province of Ontario around the world.

We're seeing clear results; more tourists are coming to Ontario. We need to make sure that they also come to Toronto.

CONTAMINATED LANDFILL

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. My constituency has the province's only hazardous waste landfill site, the largest in Canada. It has been found to be leaking methane gas and water. The clay liner of this toxic dump, which was guaranteed to be impregnable, now has at least three areas that are leaking. This creates an even higher risk to groundwater contamination, to the health and safety of the people in my community. We are talking about a hazardous, toxic site that has received an imported 386,493 tonnes of hazardous waste this year alone; almost 25,767 dump trucks worth. Minister, will you close this site and do a full environmental assessment on a site that is clearly out of control?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Thank you very much for the question. I want to assure the people who live near this landfill that we will take any action needed to ensure that the health and safety of their environment is protected.

When we found out about the situation the honourable member refers to, we immediately ordered the closure of the newly constructed sub-cell at the landfill, because there was methane gas and water seepage. We acted immediately on the methane gas and groundwater problem, and we made sure it was not affecting other areas of the landfill and that there were no impacts outside the facility. We are continuing to monitor the site to make sure that that's the case.

We are doing an investigation to see what the cause of the problem is and what remediation has to take place.

I'd be happy to work with the honourable member to ensure the health and safety of the citizenry around that area.

Ms Di Cocco: Unfortunately I understand you only have a \$1.25-million bond on that site if anything should happen. As well, in 1997 you fast-tracked the expansion to 300 acres, and Safety-Kleen, which is operating the site, bought another 1,000 acres.

So again, that liner leaks. I'm glad to hear you are trying to do something about it, but the standards are low, you have gutted the environment ministry, and the community and the residents fear for their health and safety.

Minister, it's like environmental genocide. Please shut it down and assess the situation.

Hon Mr Clement: I want to assure the honourable member that our top priority is the health and safety of the citizens around that area, and that will continue to be our top priority.

I can report to her that the honourable member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex has already talked to me about some of the issues that she has raised in question period. I would be happy to work with both him and her to deal with

some of the bond issues and other issues related to ensuring that remediation is the top priority.

Again, these sorts of things are not acceptable and we have to respond to them. That's part of our job as the Ministry of the Environment and the government of Ontario. My further commitment to her and to the honourable member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is that we will work with the local members—I believe there is a community liaison committee—and keep them advised on all the work that is undertaken to correct the problem, because we all want to correct the problem as quickly as possible.

CONTROL OF SMOKING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I recently read with great interest and concern that the number of teenage smokers is on the increase. Even the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health recently released a report that stated that the number of teenage smokers has increased to 28.3%, which is almost a third of their population. I have also read reports that tobacco companies have been allegedly targeting children as young as 11 years of age to start smoking.

Minister, this issue certainly should not be overlooked. We all know the devastating effects of tobacco smoke. Could you please tell us what our government is doing to address the issue of teen smoking?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): We share the concern. We certainly are quite alarmed to see the incidence of substance abuse among young people in the province.

We have been providing funding to the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association over the past three

years. I know they have developed programs that respond to the needs of students in grades 7, 8 and 9, to encourage them not to engage in substance abuse.

However, recently we have expanded funding for our tobacco strategy from \$9 million to \$19 million and are putting in place more programs which will specifically target teenagers. There will be public-awareness campaigns and programs in the schools that will focus on preventing smoking and encouraging those who are currently smoking to cease. We have a 1-800 number to encourage quitting smoking as well.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much for your response. It's very apropos today with several of our young people in the gallery to hear that message.

It is indeed important that we send a message to our youth that smoking is extremely harmful and that the negative effects can certainly last a lifetime. Lung disease, ranging from respiratory distress through to cancer, results from both primary and secondary smoke, and the costs to our health care system are absolutely unacceptable.

Minister, could you provide members of the House with an update on our government's tobacco strategy?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As I indicated in my first response, we have expanded the amount of money available to deal with the elimination of smoking. We have increased the funding from \$9 million to \$19 million, which is an over 100% increase. Our target group will be our teenagers in Ontario. We have a telephone line which will assist them. We are working with educators and community groups throughout Ontario to again raise public awareness. We also have a heart health program in place. We know we can decrease the incidence of heart disease and cancer if we encourage people to stop smoking. We are doing everything we can. We are working with our provincial counterparts and the federal government to eliminate the use of tobacco in the province.

1500

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Labour, the minister designated to chop down Toronto city council to possibly as few as 22 members, who is going to ram it through before Christmas. I want to tell you, before the gobbledegook I'm going to get, that I know the game. It's not about saving pennies, because the Provincial Auditor already told you how you can save millions of bucks. This is about silencing Toronto city council, because they have been tough on you guys. They've been tough on you guys as it relates to issues of homelessness, rent control, child care and public transit. So what have you done as part of the game? You're going to throw a little grenade. The grenade goes off and all these poor little city councillors are going to scamper about to protect their futures and not have enough time to worry

about any of the other issues they have attacked you on for such a long time.

Have I got the game plan pretty well defined?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The question should be going to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as I understand it. Could you help me out here? Was it a labour question or municipal affairs and housing?

Interjections.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The honourable member has quite a fertile imagination. I congratulate him on—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. You cannot—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, please. The question has to go to a minister with that responsibility. The standing orders are very clear. The question has to go to the minister responsible. The minister responsible is the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Mr Clement: Again let me congratulate the honourable member for the fertility of his imagination in terms of conspiracy theories. I'm sure the truth is out there somewhere.

I can assure the honourable member that, yes, we are always looking for ways to ensure that taxpayers throughout Ontario, indeed taxpayers in Toronto, get a break. They deserve a break, they deserve better government, they deserve more efficient government, and they deserve better services for less money. We are engaged in a process in which we are collecting information and opinions. I will take his opinions under advisement if he wishes to share them. Perhaps his caucus has a position on this issue that he would like to share with us.

Mr Marchese: I told this minister, and the other minister who I thought was designated to deal with this, that the Provincial Auditor has told them how they can save millions and millions of dollars. You have a number of ministers saying he doesn't know what he's talking about. Go to that report to save your millions.

In relation to this issue, this is what your predecessor, M. Gilchrist, said about this: "We gave the city the power to make those changes under Bill 103, and so it is quite appropriate for the councils themselves to be using the power if they see fit."

Councillors thought they had your blessing, or at least the other fellow's blessing, but I thought he was speaking for your government. All of a sudden, what I get from you is that yes, they have the power under Bill 103, but they're powerless to do anything. What you're telling me is that you can change, unilaterally, dictatorially, issues as they relate to schools and that you, unilaterally, in relation to this Toronto city council, can decide what is good for them, contrary to what your predecessor said.

Minister, I think I've got your game plan. You're throwing a grenade to keep these people busy so they don't attack you. You don't want the city councillors to attack you in your—

The Speaker: Order. The member's time is up. Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm not quite sure I understand what the honourable member is talking about. There is no game here, there is a determination from this government to make sure that taxpayers get a break, and indeed I can tell you that Toronto taxpayers have done very well under this government and under the leadership of Mayor Lastman. They have a property tax freeze. Their property taxes in Toronto, on similar homes, are lower than in Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, London or Mississauga.

They are getting a break, but we are always looking for ways to deliver better services for less. That's our obligation as a government. So if the honourable member has a solution that he would like to share with us, rather than in engaging in conspiracy theories, we're all ears because that's our mandate: Give the taxpayer a break, more jobs, more prosperity, more opportunity. That's hard work, but this government is up to it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education.

Minister, today I want to ask you about the way you are cannibalizing the provinces' school boards, taking money away from some boards, taking some of it for tax cut purposes and giving some to other boards. Particularly, I want to address what you're doing to the Toronto Board of Education. Some \$256 million has been taken out and it's already having a real effect because it comes on top of \$100 million that your ministry has removed from the students in Toronto.

I know from past experience that big numbers sometimes cause you to get away from the subject, but let me just focus this for you. That \$256 million translates into General Mercer Junior public school, where the principal, Debra Porter, says they're only able to get resources for one subject in the new elementary curriculum a year. Will you tell Debra Porter and her teachers that you are willing to take some responsibility, as the EIC said you should, for the lack of money in the Toronto school board?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): We've been very clear to all the school boards that we are funding in a much more equitable manner, so it's very fair to all of the boards in terms of what is paid for, how it is calculated.

We quite recognize that there are many boards that have unique circumstances; Toronto is certainly one. That's why they received \$700 million more, on top of what they got before, to help with the transition, because we quite recognize they have unique challenges. The Education Improvement Commission was also very clear that the Toronto board has a task to do in terms of living

within its budget, as we're asking all boards to do. It's a difficult challenge, no question, but it's a challenge that's no more difficult than anyone dealing with their household budget or their business budget. We have to live within our budget. We're prepared to help the boards solve those challenges. We've been flexible in the past in terms of helping that board and I am sure if there are legitimate issues we'll work with the board to solve them in the future.

Mr Kennedy: You just said you'll do nothing for this board.

This school is struggling to try and provide for its kids. It had a new classroom and it could get no supplies for it. I have pictures here to show you that, five weeks into the school year, there were no supplies on the shelves for that classroom. None. The teacher, Mary Ann Fedchak, who has taught for 30 years, is so frustrated with your cuts, with the position that you have put the board in, with your lack of taking responsibility, which you are exhibiting already here today, that she's going to retire. She's going to get out early. A committed teacher is going to give up because of the conditions that you've created.

I wonder if you have something positive today to say to this school, to that principal and to that teacher who, in the face of your cuts and your failing of the children, is getting out?

1510

Hon Mrs Ecker: Only a Liberal would think that \$700 million is "doing nothing." Only the Liberal Party would think that.

We appreciate that managing any school board is not an easy task. That's why we have put forward the independent consultant to help the board, to work through the challenges, to find the savings that they've been asked to make, as all boards have been asked to live within their budget. I would also like to remind the honourable member that there are many figures that are being used by staff, there are projections, there are forecasts. We've been down this road before with this board, with all due respect.

The other change here that the honourable member seems to forget is that, while teachers in classrooms were sitting there with no textbooks, with no computers, taping things together, we had school boards with high-paid staff, with fountains in their foyers, with golf courses on their land ownership list. The priorities were all wrong. We are changing that so those dollars are in the classroom, where they should be, with those good teachers—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

ONTARIO SUMMER GAMES

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

First, let me put for the record that I want to publicly thank you, Minister, for coming to Durham, for awarding the Ontario Summer Games to Durham and more

recently, last week, bringing a fat cheque to help pay for it. I really commend you for that.

Often I've heard the debate that there is a discussion between the competitors, whether able-bodied or disabled. In my riding of Durham, I've personally met a number of able-bodied athletes and disabled athletes: people like Sommer West, Rob Snoek and Jim Shaw come to mind. I see them as real competitors, able or disabled.

I'm wondering what you can tell us today about integrating those two sets of athletes in this province.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I would like to thank the member for the question. I know of his commitment both to his community and of course to the athletes in the area of Durham.

I was pleased and thrilled to attend last week with my colleagues from the Durham area to talk about the summer games that will be happening in Durham. It's quite an unusual thing, because we have eight municipalities from the Durham region which are joining together to bring forward these games.

It's very important because, along with Sault Ste Marie, this will be the first and second time that disabled athletes and able-bodied athletes, if you will—we'll use those terms for this question—are able to come together and compete at the same time. This is a wonderful opportunity. We're really looking forward to these games. We know they're going to be very successful, and I know the region of Durham is going to do a tremendous job of putting these games on.

Mr O'Toole: I'm confident that Durham, with your support, will do an excellent job. Of course, Durham is very well represented, with two or three members in cabinet, so if they need help, they know where to come.

Seriously, Minister, I'm pleased to hear that you've made a real effort to embrace and increase inclusiveness and eliminate barriers for able-bodied and disabled athletes. Perhaps you can tell us something about the future, the successive games. Is this just one time or are you going to continue this policy into the future?

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say, first of all, that there's no question that Durham is well represented by cabinet ministers, but it's also very well represented by Jerry Ouellette and John O'Toole, who have done a terrific job. We're very proud of all four members we have in Durham, and we're always grateful to the good people of Durham for continuing to re-elect Conservatives.

We are committed to an integration of the people with disabilities into games. We think it's important. I had some great opportunities this summer to see some disabled athletes, both in Kitchener and at the Mobility Cup. These people are amazing athletes in their own right, in any right that they can be judged in. It's important for us to continue to integrate the disabled people in the games. I know it's going to be very competitive. I know that a number of new competitors are very excited about the games. We're going to see a great show in

August in Durham. I hope everybody in the House is going to be there.

HÔPITAL MONTFORT MONTFORT HOSPITAL

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Tout le monde à la Chambre ici sait qu'une décision unanime historique a été rendue par trois juges de la cour divisionnaire de l'Ontario. Ces juges ont déterminé que la directive de la Commission de restructuration des services de santé de réduire de manière substantielle les services de l'hôpital Montfort doit être renversée parce que cette directive n'a pas tenu compte des droits constitutionnels des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Ma question s'adresse au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

Le premier ministre vous a confié le dossier des Affaires francophones. Vous êtes le conseiller principal du gouvernement en matière des Affaires francophones. De plus, une de vos responsabilités consiste à favoriser le développement de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario. Ma question : je vous enjoins, en tant que responsable auprès du gouvernement pour la communauté francophone de cette province, à savoir si vous êtes prêt à dire aujourd'hui même à cette communauté que vous allez respecter, que vous allez défendre avec force, que vous êtes prêt aujourd'hui même à dire oui à la décision de la cour au sujet de Montfort.

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones): Je vais référer cette question à ma collègue la ministre de la Santé.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I think the member appreciates that this is a very complicated and very serious legal case. I understand that the named respondent in this case, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, is considering the decision. They must review this and respond to the court's decision, and I have been advised that the commission will be responding in the very near future.

M^{me} Boyer : Je suis très désappointée que le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones n'ait pas pu répondre à ma question. Je ne m'adressais pas à la ministre de la Santé mais bien au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

Alors encore une fois, j'adresse ma question au ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones. Pouvez-vous vous engager aujourd'hui à vous acquitter pleinement de vos responsabilités pour défendre avec force les droits constitutionnels de vos concitoyens francophones, premièrement devant vos collègues autour de la table des ministres et aussi à votre caucus ?

L'hon M. Baird : Je vais bien sûr, comme toujours, parler à mes collègues au Conseil des ministres et de mon caucus.

C'est sûr que tous les citoyens et citoyennes francophones dans chaque région de la province reçoivent des

bons services en français, des services de qualité en français, parce que la provision de services de santé est très importante pour notre gouvernement. C'est pour cette raison que cette année on a dépensé plus de 20 \$ milliards, le plus d'argent de tous les gouvernements dans l'histoire de cette province.

EXTENSION OF DRINKING HOURS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. New Year's Eve is a special time for all. It gives us an opportunity to share with our friends and family the memories of the year past and a chance to discuss the good times in the year to come. This year will be extra special as we begin the last year of this century.

In Perth-Middlesex, plans are already underway to celebrate the occasion in many different ways. Fireworks, street dances, plays and children's games are all available for those who wish to celebrate the year 2000 in a grand style. Licensed establishments will be offering a wide variety of talent as well as beverages for those who are inclined to dance the night away.

With only 31 days to go, my constituents are eager and anxious to begin celebrating. In light of the importance of this New Year's Eve, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations recently announced that licensed establishments in Ontario will be able to serve alcohol until 4 am on January 1, 2000. I'd like the minister to explain to the people of Ontario why he chose to—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member's time is up. Minister.

1520

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I appreciate the question. We know that New Year's Eve this year is going to be a very special occasion. In the past, Ontario has recognized its special occasions by extending drinking hours. The tradition for the past few years of the Alcohol and Gaming Commission has been to extend the hours to 3 am.

Given the nature of this New Year's that's fast approaching, I asked the AGCO to consult widely to determine what consensus we might arrive at on a province-wide basis with respect to further extension of the drinking hours in the province. They talked to municipalities, policing organizations, organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the hospitality industry, and the consensus seemed to be that the responsible approach was in another extension, to 4 am.

Mr Johnson: I'm glad that we'll have more time for the events in my riding. I encourage everyone who doesn't have plans for this New Year's to join me in the riding of Perth-Middlesex for good times with good people, particularly at Al Jerky's and MoDean's in Listowel.

I know that some other Canadian provinces are extending their hours significantly beyond what we're

doing in Ontario. For instance, in Newfoundland, bars will remain open for 42 consecutive hours. That would be Labrador as well. I'd like to know if the minister has considered a longer extension?

Hon Mr Runciman: They don't have much else to do in Newfoundland perhaps. I apologize if I offended anyone.

We did take a look at what was happening in other jurisdictions. By and large, most other Canadian jurisdictions are extending the hours to 3 am or 4 am, as Ontario is doing. Really, it reflects this government's concern surrounding public safety. We have discussed this with, as I indicated, the chiefs of police organization. We've had a very positive response from Chief Grant Waddell—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

LOTTERY AND CASINO CORPORATION OFFICES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. It's about the lottery corporation. The people of Sault Ste Marie are beginning to notice that you continue to transfer executives of the lottery corporation from Sault Ste Marie to Toronto and that the OLC chairman and CEO, Mr Barbaro, is based in Toronto and that you've put the Roberta Bondar building up for sale, that you plan, in the red tape bill, to merge the lottery corporation and the casino corporation and that those two corporations are already sharing a single suite at 4120 Yonge Street in Toronto.

Can you put some of the fears of my constituents to rest? Can you demonstrate your government's confidence in the Soo? Can you show that when your officials say, "There is nothing to fear," we can in fact take their word? Will you give your word today for the record that if the red tape bill is passed and the lottery corporation and the casino corporation are merged into a new single entity, the headquarters will be in the Roberta Bondar building in Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The only person I know who's fear-mongering on this whole issue is the member himself. He has been told numerous times. We've had to have press statements. There have been 524 new jobs created in Sault Ste Marie since the opening of the Sault Ste Marie charity casino. There have been 40 staff hired corporately for the charity casino and racetrack slot machines. He knows that we've done more for Sault Ste Marie than the past governments—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. Order. Did the Chair of Management Board finish?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On behalf of the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and the member from Broadview-Greenwood, I'd like to ask the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to withdraw the

derogatory comments about the province of Newfoundland.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): As I indicated, I will withdraw my remarks if they offend anyone.

The Speaker: The time for oral questions is over.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have one that's been approved by the table, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas patients requiring eye care in Niagara are faced with a shortage of ophthalmologists and as a result, are compelled to wait several weeks to secure an appointment with an ophthalmologist;

"Whereas, while the shortage of ophthalmologists is in existence, the removal of the billing cap on these medical specialists provides a temporary but essential easing of the health care crisis;

"Whereas the solution of the Ontario Ministry of Health removing the exemptions of the billing cap and forcing patients from Niagara to travel along the very busy Queen Elizabeth Highway to receive treatment in Hamilton;

"Be it resolved that the Ontario Ministry of Health remove the cap on billing for ophthalmologists in Niagara until such time as Niagara is no longer an underserved area."

I affix my signature as I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments in this particular petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions forwarded to me by Cathy Walker on behalf of the CAW. Cathy is the director of the health and safety department of CAW national office. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens);

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to these carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances in work;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

I continue to support these petitioners by adding my name.

MARRIAGE

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the majority of Canadians believe that fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and the legislatures, and not the unelected judiciary;

"Whereas the Supreme Court of Canada, in the M and H case, has rejected biology, tradition and societal norms to redefine the term 'spouse' to include the non-procreative partnerships of homosexual couples, and has effectively granted these relationships 'equivalent-to-married' status;

"Whereas the court's decision will devalue the institution of marriage, and it is the duty of the Legislature to ensure that marriage, as it has always been known and understood, be preserved and protected;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature to use all possible legislative and administrative measures, including invoking section 33 of the charter (the 'notwithstanding clause'), to preserve and protect the commonly understood, exclusive definitions of 'spouse,' 'marriage' and 'family' in all areas of provincial law."

I have signed this petition.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I have 812 names here on a petition to add to the over 1,000 that I presented last week.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Conservative government has gravely impacted the education of our students with special needs through the introduction of the special education funding formula and the subsequent freeze in funding;

"Whereas the children of Ontario, especially those requiring extra support, are being forced to accept lower levels of service while at the same time being expected to meet higher expectations by this government;

"Whereas each and every child deserves the right to learn to his/her potential;

1530

"We, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Education and the Ontario Conservative government to make the necessary changes in the funding formula to see that every child has the support required to learn, especially our children with special needs. We petition the minister to listen to parents, teachers and school boards who have acted as strong advocates for these students."

I support this with my signature.

ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): The government has recently increased the hunting and fishing licence fees in this province. A number of my constituents are very concerned about the fact that the special-purposes account is not being used in the manner that it should be.

I have petitions here from Thunder Bay, Dorion, Hurkett, Nipigon, Red Rock. They're very concerned and want to have the funds being properly used.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Black Sturgeon Road in the district of Thunder Bay is an important access road for fishing and hunting to area lakes and forests;

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources is attempting to block access to this road by refusing to implement upgrades;

"Whereas a vast area will be rendered inaccessible unless the government maintains responsibility for this road;

"Whereas the government has recently increased fees for hunting and fishing and has considerable funds in its special purpose account;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to use funds from the Ministry of Natural Resources special purpose account to maintain the Black Sturgeon Road as an important access road to protect the rights and freedoms of fishers and hunters in the district of Thunder Bay."

I am very keen to have the government listen to this petition, and I am very proud to sign it as well.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition signed by many residents in the west end of Toronto against the closure of Toronto schools. It is addressed to the Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government's decision to slash education funding could lead to the closure of many neighbourhood schools, including one of the most community-oriented schools like F.H. Miller Junior School; and

"Whereas the present funding formula does not take into account the historic and cultural links schools have with their communities nor the special education pro-

grams that have developed as a direct need of our communities; and

"Whereas the prospect of closing neighbourhood community schools will displace many children and put others on longer bus routes; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in 1995 not to cut classroom spending, but has already cut at least \$1 billion from our schools; and

"Whereas F.H. Miller Junior School is a community school with many links to the immediate neighbourhood, such as the family centre, after-school programs, special programs from Parks and Recreation, and a heritage language program;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens, demand that the Harris government changes the funding formula to take into account historic, cultural and community links that F.H. Miller Junior School has established."

Since I am in total agreement with this petition, I am signing my name to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads, as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I respectfully add my name to the list of petitioners on this important matter.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Petitions continue to come in related to the inaccuracy and underfunding of the northern health travel grant. We are very close to 10,000 signatures. I am hoping the minister is listening and will do something about it.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition against the hospital emergency departments closing. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the residents in the west end of Toronto no longer have emergency room service at the Humber River Regional Hospital, formerly known as Northwestern Hospital, Keele Street site; and

"Whereas the west end of Toronto is the hardest-hit area for emergency restrictions in all of Toronto; and

"Whereas Premier Mike Harris and Minister of Health Elizabeth Witmer had promised changes to deliver a solution to the mess they initially created by closing hospitals; and

"Whereas it is not acceptable to Toronto residents that every one of the eight emergency room departments in the city's west end were closed on Monday, January 22, 1999;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on Premier Mike Harris and his government to immediately address the health care problems in the west end of Toronto by reopening the emergency room at the Northwestern hospital, now known as the Humber River Regional Hospital's Keele Street site, and increase the number of in-patient hospital beds and keep its promise for interim long-term-care beds."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it as well.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, stamped by the table. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the northern travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside of

their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with this petition for fairness.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation last week concerning the consultation process in regards to an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

1540

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS, GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI, LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 24, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses

lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to the order of the House dated Monday, November 29, 1999, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Skarica has moved second reading of Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1541 to 1546.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Lankin, Frances
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Levac, David
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martel, Shelley
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Bryant, Michael	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS,
GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU
LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI,
LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr Skarica moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to split this afternoon's time equally among the three caucuses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Skarica: I am going to split my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

This is third reading of the bill to make amendments to various acts to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario. The key to the bill is to implement 30 more tax cuts in addition to the 69 we implemented in the four years prior to the last election.

It was interesting to note that the Liberals again, on second reading, all stood up and voted against tax cuts. As I indicated in the second reading debate, I don't know how to reconcile that with the fact that they passed the taxpayer protection act and agreed to that and joined our party in approving that legislation. They fully know that we campaigned on the tax cuts that are implemented in this bill. The public re-elected this government based on the commitments made in the Blueprint, which now appear in this budget plan and total 30 more tax cuts. So even though they know these tax cuts are being implemented and even though they know they can't raise those taxes again, due to the taxpayer protection legislation—they voted for the taxpayer legislation knowing that these 30 tax cuts have been voted for by the public, yet they're opposing these tax cuts. So I have some trouble understanding the logic and consistency of their position.

As the Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, indicated today, we've had tremendous economic growth in Ontario in the last five years. In particular, since the Conservative government took over in 1995, we have created 615,000 jobs. The tax cuts started in 1996 and, as indicated in the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, referred to by Minister of Finance Ernie Eves today, it's interesting to note the economic growth since the tax cuts started to be implemented. The rate of growth for the whole five-year period from 1990 to 1995 was 1.1%, virtually no growth at all. In fact, there was a loss of 10,000 jobs.

In 1995 this government took over and, pursuant to the commitments made in the Common Sense Revolution, we started to implement the tax cuts in 1996. At first there was a minimal impact of 1.6% economic growth in

1996. But then more tax cuts started to be implemented, and as the tax cuts started to accelerate so did economic growth. In 1997, after the first few instalments of tax cuts, we had economic growth of 4.8%. So compare 4.8% economic growth in 1997 with 1.6% the prior year and 1.1% for the whole five-year period under the NDP government.

I remember being in the Legislature in 1997, and basically the view of the opposition was: "We don't really have an explanation. It's exports, it's the low Canadian dollar." However, in 1998 economic growth was again very high, much higher than in the five years from 1990. It was at 4.2%. What was significant about 1998 is that we had the greatest job growth in the history of this country. Over 200,000 jobs were created in 1998, the most in history, and what was also significant about 1998 was that there was virtually an economic boom in Ontario. We hadn't seen that for six or seven years. The opposition really didn't have an explanation for that. Their mantra at that time was, "Well, you have to borrow to pay for the tax cuts." I heard that many times. The member for St Catharines basically said that daily.

But the truth of the matter is that we didn't have to borrow a nickel for the tax cuts, because as our economy was growing, as we created 200,000 jobs, as people were coming off welfare rolls in the hundreds of thousands, there was a lot more inflow of revenue to the government. The net effect was that revenues were not going down but were increasing even though the rate of taxes was decreasing, and that was purely and simply because there was an economic stimulus.

In any event, after that record economic growth in 1998—more job creation in the history of this country—Ontario moved in 1999. It would be pretty tough to duplicate those kinds of results—4.8% in 1997, 4.2% in 1998. In fact, the forecast from all the economists as we moved into 1999 was that it was really going to be tough to keep up that tremendous rate of growth, and they projected 3.7%. Even at 3.7% the TD Bank was indicating that Ontario had the strongest economy in Canada.

We were growing at a rate faster than any province. We were growing at a rate faster than the United States on the whole. We were growing at a rate faster than our competitors on the Great Lakes. In fact, we were creating jobs at a faster rate than any other country in the G7. So we were having tremendous economic growth, and the TD Bank projected that it would be hard to duplicate it. But they still felt the economy was strong and with the stimulus of tax cuts and the strong American economy—there's no doubt about it; unfortunately our dollar is weak compared to the American dollar, and that gave us a competitive advantage.

It didn't give just Ontario a competitive advantage. It gave all the provinces a competitive advantage over the American states and a lot of other countries. But it was in Ontario that most of the economic growth was taking place. Almost half the economic growth in Canada was happening in Ontario. If you look at some of the other provinces, there were some economic disasters.

If I was going to look for an economic disaster in Canada, the first question I would ask is, "Where is there an NDP government?" Well, there's an NDP government in British Columbia, and what have you got? Another economic disaster. They will tell you that there was an Asian crisis.

Interjections.

Mr Skarica: Yes, there was an Asian crisis. But the Asian crisis basically affected the west coast of the United States, and they didn't have the economic disaster there was in British Columbia.

So what you have is record economic growth in Ontario, far outstripping the other provinces, basically outstripping the G7, and there has to be a reason for that.

In any event, with all that background, the forecast was that the economy would still be growing strongly, and the economists figured we would have economic growth of 3.7%, which still would be pretty strong—stronger than the rest of Canada and stronger than the G7. But what do we actually have? It looks like we're going to have 5% growth in 1999. On a percentage basis we're having the strongest growth in 1999 that we've had in this decade, and that's after record growth in 1998 and record job creation growth of over 200,000 jobs.

How are we doing in job creation in 1999? According to the Ontario Economic Outlook, on page 16, 177,000 net new jobs have been created so far in 1999 compared to the same period in 1998, and we still have a couple of months left. So in 1998 we had record job creation, and it looks like we're on pace to do it again.

The only real question in the 1990s is: What's the year that's going to have the most job growth, 1998 or 1999? I think that's a pretty good question for Ontario to have to consider.

1600

Where have all the jobs been created? In second reading I heard the debate and some of the Liberal backbenchers were indicating, "Well, you know, these are McJobs, they're part-time jobs." That's not what the economic statement is indicating. They say the jobs created in 1990 have been full-time jobs. Another one of the backbenchers in the Liberal caucus said, "Part-time jobs; there are a lot of part-time jobs," but in fact in 1990 they have been full-time jobs, almost at a record level, 177,000 at this point.

Where did they come from? Manufacturing has added 55,000 net new jobs. Other leading sources of job growth include: retail and wholesale trade, 34,000 jobs; professional, scientific and technical services, 29,000 jobs; financial, insurance, real estate and leasing industries, 21,000 jobs; construction, 20,000 jobs; and restructuring, zero jobs, to answer the question from one of the members opposite.

What has happened to the unemployment rate is that in fact it continues to plummet. When the government took office, the unemployment rate was 8.9%, a very significant sum, a very significant percentage, and far in excess of what was happening in the United States. The unemployment rate in the United States has continued to

diminish to the point now where it's between 3% and 4%, and that's basically full employment, given the non-accelerating rate of inflation. Ontario now is following that lead. We're down to 6% in October 1999, an almost 3% drop since we took office. That's in four years. That's a pretty incredible statistic.

One of the other problems when we first took office was that whatever job growth had taken place, young people were missing out. In fact that picture is now changing as well. Even in February 1997, when the economy was finally starting to take off, we still had very high youth unemployment. In February 1997, there was a youth unemployment rate of 18%, but now that has dipped significantly to the point where, in October 1999, it's 12.7%, which is a drop of a full six percentage points.

What's happening with the economic recovery—even the Toronto Star now indicates that Ontario is booming—is that there has been growth in sectors throughout the economy and a lot of people are benefiting. The youth sector, which did not benefit from what happened in our economy in the 1990s and had a very high unemployment rate of almost 20%, which is almost Third World figures, that rate has now been reduced dramatically. In 1999, youth averaged 50,000 more jobs than in the previous year, and 1998 was the year that had the strongest and fastest job growth in 20 years, I understand.

What has happened with Ontario as well is that now we've become the North American leader in manufacturing job growth. In 1998, Ontario recorded its seventh consecutive year of record production of motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts. The auto industry added over 15,000 net new jobs in the 1995-98 period. Also, strong job gains occurred in metal fabrication, 15,000 jobs; chemicals, 9,000 jobs; and rubber and plastics, 8,000 jobs. These aren't McJobs. These are full-time, good-paying jobs that are permanent and add considerably to the economic vibrancy of this province. They're another reason why, even though we've cut the income tax rate, our revenues have gone up, to the tune of \$6 billion. That's not just \$6 billion total; that's \$6 billion each and every year.

Ontario has been a job creator. As I've indicated, our job growth here is stronger than the United States in general and all the Great Lakes states. Michigan, which is our major competitor, had manufacturing job growth of 79,000 jobs between 1995 and 1998. We in fact had 98,000 jobs. Of all the states and provinces in North America, only Texas beat us in the last three years.

As well, one of the encouraging aspects of what's happening with our job creation is the following fact. One of the problems that Canada has is that with all the provinces except Ontario, most of their exports, most of their economy, is resource-based. You've got an economy that basically relies—I don't have the statistic in front of me, but I think it's about 80%—on resource-based manufacturing. The problem with that is if you don't have a diversified economy, if the price of oil goes down, you have a problem if you rely on the price of oil. Right now that's a benefit to Alberta because the price of

oil has doubled in the last year. However, if you look at British Columbia, some of their raw materials have depressed prices and that has hurt the economy, in addition to having an NDP government, which is almost a virtual guarantee for having a bad economy.

In any event, one of the really encouraging signs about our economy is it is diversified. Resources account for only about 15% of the Ontario economy. The rest of it is manufacturing, and there has been a rapid expansion as well in information technology industries. A recent Deloitte and Touche study concluded that the GTA has developed into one of North America's premier centres for information technology, and it's one of the top five R&D-performing urban areas in North America.

I anticipate that what I'm going to hear from the Liberal backbenches, when it's time for them to speak, is: "It's not really your fault. It has nothing to do with your tax cuts, it's all exports, and it would have happened no matter what." I think the best example to refute that argument is to look at what's happening in the film industry. Each and every budget has tax breaks for the film industry. If you look back to when we took office in 1995, that film industry was depressed and in a decline. What happened with the Ontario government and, I have to concede, somewhat with the Canadian government—it's one of the few times they've recognized the importance of tax cuts—is both levels of governments, but most particularly the Ontario government, dramatically cut taxes for the film and entertainment movie industry.

With the cheap Canadian dollar which existed in 1994-95—when we took over in 1996 we gave tax credits specifically directed at that industry. What happened with that industry was the movie moguls, if I could put it that way, looked around North America and thought, "Toronto is a great place to go, because not only is there a low Canadian dollar, which exists in the rest of Canada, but we're going to get a tax credit, so when we make money there, we'll keep that money." There was a dramatic increase in investment by the movie industry. Each and every budget came through with more tax credits, and what happened with that industry is it started to grow and grow. Basically, foreign investment, the last time I looked at those statistics—for 1998—was increasing at a rate of 58% over the previous year. That industry in fact grew substantially and is creating 35,000 jobs and producing an economic stimulus somewhere in the area of \$1.5 billion.

There's an example of how you have an industry that was languishing; we were definitely falling behind the United States. We targeted tax breaks. There was investment in that area, including significant foreign investment, and what happened was you had this tremendous expansion of jobs, 35,000 jobs, in that area. All those people are paying taxes. Some of them may or may not have been on welfare, but certainly they're not on the welfare rolls.

What happens is that government revenues go up even though the tax rate goes down, because you have the jobs; those people are paying taxes. At the same time,

there is a lot more economic activity, a lot more investment. In fact, members of the Legislature see virtually every day, when they walk around this area, movies being made on a very regular basis. I can't recall seeing that when we first arrived here in 1995.

1610

Rather than give numerous statistics, it's clear from all the statistics that appear in the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review there's just tremendous growth. Merchandise exports have grown by 16.2% in the first nine months of 1999; that's on top of an 11.8% growth in 1998 and a 9.7% growth in 1997. There's just been tremendous economic growth.

What has that meant for balancing the budget? Simply, we're ahead of our plan to balance the budget. It's interesting to note that even though with the tax cuts—and again the mantra of the Liberals, the opposition, was, "Those tax cuts, you're going to have to pay for them, you're going to have to cut programs, you're going to have to borrow money." None of that has ever happened. In fact, the revenues to the government have increased for the simple reason that there are more people working, there are less people on welfare and revenues have increased. Particularly with welfare payments, a lot of people have come off welfare, and that's a significant saving to people on welfare.

The tax cuts in my area of Hamilton-Wentworth have produced savings of almost \$200 million. If people don't pay that in taxes then they can spend it instead on consumption. The argument is, "You're going to have to pay for those tax cuts." In fact, we haven't. We've made money on the tax cuts—\$6 billion a year, as I've indicated—because of the economic growth. We keep exceeding targets. The budget was based on a conservative economic growth of 3.7%. We've vastly exceeded that, by 5%, and the impact has been that the deficits have decreased to the point where this year we anticipated a deficit of \$2.6 billion but the deficit will be \$1 billion. We're actually ahead of schedule to balance the budget next year.

With the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act that was approved a couple of weeks ago in this Legislature, we've now seen the end of the era of deficits. I think that's something that we can all be proud of on this side. Frankly, I don't think that would have happened without tremendous courage by the members of this side. We stood up to the special interests. We stabilized the growth of government, many administrative areas. Government spending was reduced and at the same time we implemented the tax cuts and achieved significant extra revenues for the provincial budget to pay for increasing demands in health care and education.

To conclude, the track record of this government is clear. It has implemented the tax cuts it promised. That has produced a tremendous economic growth. It can't be a coincidence that we've had more growth in Ontario here than anywhere else in Canada, really in the free world. We're far outpacing our immediate competitors, and as far as the lower Canadian dollar goes, exports to

the United States, those are advantages that are available to other provinces and yet they're not experiencing the economic growth we are.

I'm happy to conclude by indicating that the 69 tax cuts have produced tremendous economic growth. The further 30 I think will keep us on the same track and keep Canada growing at a rate faster than any of the G7 major industrial countries. It's something that all members on this side of the House are very proud of.

I'll turn over the rest of the time to the member for Scarborough Centre.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It does give me great pleasure to rise in this House today to speak in favour of Bill 14, the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act.

In our first term in office, the Mike Harris government sat for more days than any other government in recent memory and yes, there was good reason for it. In the elections of 1999 and 1995, our government made many commitments to the people in Ontario; and in 1999, just as in 1995, the people of Ontario responded by voting for us. On both occasions, the people of Ontario told us they wanted a government of action.

The people of Ontario were tired of governments that talked a big game but simply didn't deliver. The people of Ontario were tired of governments that sat idly by, twiddling their thumbs as the serious problems of the day were left to get worse and worse. The people of Ontario were tired of governments that refused to make the tough decisions that were necessary. Indeed, the people of Ontario were tired of governments that took the easy way out and raised taxes instead of cutting spending.

Governments of the day were quite content to raise taxes to levels that resulted in double-digit unemployment rates. Governments were quite content to let budget deficits and debt increase to levels that threatened our health care, education and core social services. Reacting to high unemployment levels, governments were content to pursue the Pavlovian response of raising welfare rates rather than making the tough decisions that were necessary to get the economy back on track.

While watching our students fall further and further behind the rest of the industrialized world, governments continued to be content to merely throw money at the education system. Once again, rather than making the tough decisions that would ensure that the money in the system would actually reach the children in the classroom, governments refused to make those tough decisions.

I guess the same can be said about health care. Rather than make the tough decisions that would see our health care system modernized and equipped for the needs of an aging population, governments were again content to throw more and more money at the problem without solving it. More than one government took this "Clench fists tightly and pray that the problem will go away" approach to health care and education, and as a result there are only a few Liberal and NDP MPPs here today who survived the wrath of the voters.

In 1995 the people of Ontario elected a government with the mandate and the willpower to make the tough decisions. Rather than raise taxes, increase the deficit and encourage people to go on welfare, we made the tough decisions.

The Mike Harris government cut personal income tax rates by 30% in our first term. We reformed property taxes. In fact, over 75% of homeowners in my riding of Scarborough Centre received property tax decreases because of our reforms. We created exemptions to the employer health tax for small business. We took hundreds of unnecessary, job-killing regulations off the books.

All told, our efforts on the job creation front have helped lead to the creation of well over 600,000 net new jobs in Ontario since we came to office. In Scarborough this has resulted in massive commercial development undertakings such as the Cedarbrae Mall redevelopment, Scarborough Town Centre expansion and the building of Kennedy Commons and the Home Depot, creating well over 2,000 jobs in the retail and service sectors in my riding alone.

Recently, decade-old plans for a condominium development in my riding were resumed because the economy is finally strong enough to make it worthwhile.

1620

When we came to office, over 1.3 million Ontarians were on welfare. This was unacceptable. Our tax cuts for jobs and welfare reforms have helped over 400,000 people once again become productive members of society.

We inherited an \$11-billion deficit. We reduced that deficit, and we're on track to meeting our commitment to eliminate it in the next fiscal year, as confirmed by the Honourable Ernie Eves today.

We reformed the education system. We reduced the bureaucracy and ensured that more money went to the children in the classroom. We began restructuring the health—

Interjections.

Ms Mushinski: Yes, I know they can't take the truth over there, but they never really were able to handle the truth.

We began restructuring the health care system to make sure that we are ready to deal with the changing needs of our population.

The people of Ontario wanted us to make many changes in our first term, and we have delivered the changes Ontarians asked for.

Yet, while we're indeed a better province today, there are still greater things ahead of us, and much work still needs to be done to achieve them. That is why the workmanlike spirit of our first term must and has to continue into our second. We must do all that we can to help the economy in order to continue creating jobs and opportunities for the future. That is why we must again cut income taxes, to put \$4 billion back into the economy and create 825,000 new jobs.

We are determined to break the cycle of welfare dependency. As we all know, the best social program in

the world is a job. As well, giving everyone the opportunity to earn a living is the only practical way to address serious issues such as child poverty.

We must continue to reform our health care system to provide the most modern and effective services to Ontarians. We must protect health care funding, which we will increase to record-breaking levels. We must continue to aim at achieving excellence in Ontario's schools. That is why we must guarantee stable funding to boards on the basis of enrolment.

None of these goals, however, can be achieved without a strong economy. We cannot adequately address the funding needs of our health care and education systems without the added revenue that we have generated through tax cuts. By easing the tax burden for each individual, we have helped get nearly two thirds of a million people back to work and paying income taxes.

People have had more money to spend on goods and services, which has led to more revenue being generated through sales tax. Our tax cuts have put money back into the health care and education systems, something we said we would do.

As a government, we have a responsibility to the people of Ontario to do all that we can to make certain they have the opportunity to succeed. To do this, we must move ahead with building a strong economy. To build a strong economy, we, as a government, must get out of the way of those who invest in it; we must continue to provide hope and opportunity for those who are still on social assistance; we must cut taxes for the low-income families that are living from month to month; we must cut taxes for the middle-class families that see the federal government stealing EI from every single paycheque. We must prove to all Ontarians that our province is indeed the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member for Etobicoke Centre, who is the Minister of Labour, rose in the House the other day to object to the word "stealing." Are you able to give a ruling this time whether "stealing" is acceptable?

The Acting Speaker: I ruled at that point, since the word was used in the context of the speech and wasn't specifically pointed at anybody in the House, that it was in order. In being consistent with that ruling, I don't find anything out of order.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You can say that the government is stealing from the people of Ontario in their health care and in their education. That is perfectly all right, is it? Because that's exactly what they've been doing.

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Ms Mushinski: May I continue then? We've come a long way over the past few years to make our economy more competitive and to create jobs and to help people to become better off and more secure. Other leaders I know are looking to us, and looking to Ontario's example, as a

model for building stronger communities and stronger economies.

Speaking today at the Fraser Institute in Vancouver, Premier Mike Harris will say that we can all be very proud as Canadians and can look forward to the future with pride and confidence.

However, for Canada to reach its full potential in the next century, it is absolutely essential that the federal government reduce federal taxes. Also, it's important to encourage innovation and new ideas to make our country a place where creative thinkers are valued and there are far more leaner, more efficient governments in Canada.

In closing, I will say that the people of our province and the rest of the country can count on Ontario to take a leadership role in keeping our nation competitive so that we can all be more secure in the 21st century.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's an honour to rise this afternoon to take part in the debate on Bill 14. As a member of this government, it is exciting for me to see this legislation that our minister has brought forward so early in our mandate.

We made promises to the people of Ontario and we intend to keep those promises. In our election platform, Blueprint, we asked the citizens of our province to support a mandate which would provide them with a safer Ontario while at the same time growing an economy that would provide us with the necessary resources to support the health and education systems that our citizens expect and deserve.

Our government has had the courage to make the difficult but necessary decisions in order to rebuild an Ontario that will be able to sustain a strong economy throughout changes in a global economy.

Let me again update the members present.

Here is some of the legislation brought forward. As an example, Bill 7, An Act to protect taxpayers against tax increases, to establish a process requiring voter approval for proposed tax increases and to ensure that the Provincial Budget is a balanced budget, was brought forward as an election promise to the citizens of Ontario and to ensure that no future government would inherit the financial disaster the Harris government inherited in June 1995.

As outlined in the Common Sense Revolution, our plan to balance the outrageous deficit of \$11.3 billion is exactly on target. The Minister of Finance gave us his Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review earlier today.

In 1995, the people of Ontario were told that their government would balance the books over a five-year period while at the same time issuing tax cuts which would stimulate our economy. The minister informed us today that, as promised, the budget will be balanced in the year 2000-01, exactly on the target. It was wonderful news when the minister proved once again that tax cuts do fuel a strong economy.

1630

The Ontario economy is expanding at a vigorous pace this year. The economic climate of the business and

consumer confidence and spending and investment in Ontario is up. Real gross domestic product rose by more than previously expected, at an annualized rate of 5.2% in the first quarter and 5% in the second quarter of 1999. So far this year, retail sales are up 7.3%, as the minister said earlier, and housing starts are up 24.3%. Exports have grown by 16.2%.

The Ontario economy is very strong. In the May 1999 budget, the minister projected real gross domestic product growth of 3.7% for 1999. Based on our performance so far in 1999, we and the private sector are now projecting a growth of 5% for 1999. As the minister said earlier today, the people of Ontario can now see that the hard work and sacrifices of the past five years are paying off.

As we have said many times before, the debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs. Tax cuts have fuelled vigorous job growth in Ontario. In spite of comments from the members opposite, in the first half of this decade Ontario consistently underperformed against the rest of the country. From January 1990 to September 1995, Ontario lost nearly 50,000 jobs, while the rest of Canada gained over 350,000 jobs. The work is not yet done. So far this year, 177,000 Ontarians have found jobs, virtually all of them full-time. I'm pleased to be able to support this debate at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Bradley: I wish we were debating the restructuring of local government this afternoon, because it's perhaps a more relevant and compelling issue before the Conservative caucus and, indeed, eventually this House. I do want to say I have a good deal of sympathy with the predicament in which some members have found themselves, having campaigned on the fact that they would not want to be part of a government that would break a promise in terms of restructuring, that is, imposing one big city on a community. If I were in that position in Niagara I would certainly, regardless of who wanted me to vote how, be voting against one big government. That's a commitment I make in this House today, that if a bill ever came in about one big government in Niagara, I'd do that.

So I have sympathy for others who may represent places like Ancaster and Stoney Creek and Greensville and Dundas and Glanbrook, when the powers that be who really control this government—Guy Giorno and the whiz kids—say, "This is the way it must be," and the individual elected members find themselves in a predicament of not being able to represent their local folks. I am sympathetic with them and I certainly will be looking forward with anticipation to what they will do in terms of keeping their promise to their electors. I know them to be noble people, people who will, above all, keep their promise to their local electors.

I'd like to vote for one of these bills that the government passes, but here they're breaking another promise. In the 1995 election campaign—I'm reading this here—the government promised that the sale of

assets would go to pay down the debt. In keeping with this, they established the Ontario opportunities fund in the 1996 budget to channel the proceeds of the sale of assets into debt, not to current-year finance.

I used to listen to my friends in the chamber of commerce and the taxpayers coalition and all these other organizations which were concerned about taxes and so on, and paying down the debt, and they said that debt accumulation was a problem. I agree with that, that the debt accumulation is a problem in this province. That's why I wanted to ensure that indeed these funds were being devoted to paying down the debt. Now I find out in the bill they're not going to be, and I can't vote for the bill. I wish you would bring forward a bill that would get a consensus in this House, that one could vote for.

I also noticed, and I can see that this has something to do with the bill, but I was watching an infomercial the other night on CNN and I thought I saw—I could be wrong—the member for Oshawa doing an infomercial for the National Rifle Association. I don't know if anybody else saw this; it could be mistaken identity. Somebody on the other side will help me out and correct me if that's the case.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): That's the case.

Mr Bradley: It is the case, I'm told. My friend from Perth-Middlesex tells me that it is the case.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Bradley: I'm trying to get the riding right.

Mr Johnson: Perth-Middlesex.

Mr Bradley: No, I'm trying to get the riding of Mr Ouellette correct.

Interjection: Oshawa.

Mr Bradley: Jerry Ouellette, Oshawa. That's right, Oshawa.

I thought he was part of the infomercial. I'm surprised because the law-and-order government that we have on the other side I know would be concerned about someone perhaps doing a commercial, an elected representative doing commercials for the National Rifle Association. I know that those who are in the government and are worried about this will want to look into that. I don't know whether members are allowed to do commercials. Maybe we are. I don't know that. But it did seem odd. Maybe I'm wrong. I will apologize in the House if I'm wrong, if somebody can clarify that for me. Maybe the Minister of Transportation, who has an interest in these matters, would be able to clarify it.

I just want to say that when I see the tax cuts here, I say to the local people, "Well, you got your tax cut, didn't you?" Every time they say a service is cut, I say, "Did you get your tax cut?" The hard fact is that you can't continue to cut income taxes and continue to provide the services to which the people of this province have become accustomed, and justifiably so, such as a good health care system, a strong education system, proper transportation in this province and so on.

The government has been forced to engage in even further cuts to its budget, already engaged in a budget-cutting exercise, which has really diminished the positive role that government plays in the lives of people in the community at large that we know as Ontario.

I noticed that there is no provision for dealing with the banks in this. We see what the banks are doing today. The banks with their huge profits that they have—I'm not saying they're unprecedented—are all announcing that they're laying people off, firing them out into the streets. I don't know how that could be justified.

The latest was the Royal Bank. I think they said 6,000 people are going to be thrown out in the street. If the Royal Bank were losing money or had significant losses in the year, I could understand that; wouldn't like it, but I could understand it. They're making huge profits—I guess the top person gets a bonus when they get that blip in the stock market—and firing people out in the street, cutting back their hours.

I can remember a Royal Bank at the Grantham Plaza in St Catharines that used to be open, not that long ago, from 8 o'clock in the morning to 8 o'clock at night; in other words, serving ordinary people at regular hours, on Saturdays from 9 am to 5 pm. Today, it's cut back considerably. Now, they don't open until 9:30. Sounds like the old days, when they didn't open until 10. They stop at 5 o'clock and maybe 6 o'clock or 8 o'clock on a Friday night, only 9 to 1 on a Saturday. In other words, they're constricting these hours.

You say, "Why don't you go to trust companies?" Well, trust companies are being gobbled up by the big banks. What happens is, do they say, "Oh, well, here's another service for people?" No. They gobble them up and close them down, put them out of business, put people out of work. I think that's grossly unfair to those who have given dedicated service to our major banks in this province. Yet I do not hear any protest from this government. Usually they're railing on about the federal government doing something about something. Here's a chance to rail against the banks, but they are silent.

I notice, as well—because I hear a lot about debt over there—the debt has increased by \$21 billion at least under the Harris administration. Once again, when I used to meet with the chamber of commerce political committee in the provincial section, they would say, "Look, we've got to solve the deficit problem and the debt problem." This government has been in power now into its fifth year, and they still haven't balanced the budget. Why is that? It's because they have given up potential revenues, as the Dominion Bond Rating Service said, and therefore they've had to make huge cuts and at the same time allow the debt to accumulate even further, even though they used to talk a lot about the debt.

1640

When you have tax cuts, it means the people in the Niagara Peninsula do not have the ophthalmologists they need. I know that some ophthalmologists are meeting today to discuss their future. Will they continue to provide a service when they're only getting about a quarter of

the compensation they would normally get? They're trying to do is provide service for people in our area. If you're underserved, the only solution in the short term, and perhaps the mid-term, is to lift the cap so that people can get the service and don't have to travel to Hamilton. I'm sure my colleagues in Hamilton know that the situation with ophthalmologists there is critical as well, and they can't have people from the Niagara Peninsula coming in competing with people in the Hamilton area.

That can be solved by the Minister of Health. But what is this government doing? I have to tell the people: "You may not get the care of an ophthalmologist, but you're getting your tax cut. Are you happy with the tax cut now?"

I say that to the downtown business people in St Catharines. When I went to their meeting they were shaking their fists, led by Frank Sheehan, the former member for Lincoln, who was advising them. He said: "It's the local government's fault. They're the ones who are putting up your taxes."

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): He voted for them.

Mr Bradley: As the member for Niagara Centre says, he voted for the bills that made these changes. But it's easier to blame the local government and then want to abolish all the local representatives than it is for the provincial government to take responsibility for the net downloading of \$18 million worth of additional financial responsibilities on the Niagara region.

I notice—and my friend from Niagara Centre would be interested in this—that not only do we have fewer politicians; we have fewer pages. I remember when there was a cut in this Legislature in the number of pages who could serve at Queen's Park. I suggest their pay is probably quite limited as well.

Mr Kormos: Their pay has been cut, and their benefits.

Mr Bradley: The pay, the benefits and the number of pages have been cut. We're preying upon the youth of our country. These pages serve so well in this Legislative Assembly, but even they haven't escaped the axe of Mike Harris and they don't get the tax cut. The rich people get the tax cut, and the pages bear the brunt of the effects of that tax cut.

The other day I met Bill Saunderson, a former Toronto member and a person for whom I have a lot of respect. We were recalling the gas price issue. I remember asking him a question as Minister of Tourism at the time, and he said the government would be crazy to get involved in the regulation of gas prices. I said to him, "You know, your members were shaking in their boots as you said it." That was an honest answer about what this government thinks about gas prices. He was the one who gave the only honest answer I heard over there about gas prices. The rest of them pointed to the federal government or pointed somewhere else, never to their friends in the oil industry, the oil barons themselves. I just remind them of that. I have a bill before the House and Mike Colle has a

bill before the House. Both those bills deserve passing by the people around here.

I notice as well that the poor people of Sarnia are faced with a situation where they didn't have a hearing on the expansion of the hazardous waste dump, and today the Liberal member for Sarnia-Lambton is up saying, "We've got real problems with this dump." Well, that's getting rid of red tape. You didn't have your hearing. I hope you're happy with the result of that.

Anyway, I want to ensure that my other colleagues have an opportunity to speak and to make sure I have left the appropriate time, so I will now close my remarks.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I am pleased to rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 14, known as the budget bill. I want to go back to Hansard of November 22, when we were debating this bill at second reading, and I said, "I'm willing to suggest that debate will be limited on this bill before we're finished, as the government has done on so many other bills." As you know, it was only yesterday that we were voting a motion to choke off debate on this budget bill. One of the most important issues that we discuss in this Legislature is the budget, and I'm sorry to say that today, at third reading in fact, we're going to be limited in the sense that there's agreement that we'll have only this one session of third reading.

As well, you will recall that yesterday, while that motion of choking off democratic debate was being discussed, the member from Kitchener Centre quoted from my comments on the 22nd. He said that I had debated on that day that "A job doesn't mean a damn thing..." and he stopped there. In the quiet of the debate today, I want to reconfirm, as I did in my point of order yesterday, that what I said was, "A job doesn't mean a damn thing to a child in a classroom who doesn't have the assistance they need." In other words, I agree that a job is everything to everybody, but you have to have the education first.

In the few minutes I have today, I want to speak about the deplorable lack of assistance that's being given to our children in schools today who have special needs. In fact, there are children who aren't even in school today because there isn't the special assistance they need. Their parents can't let them go and not be cared for the way they should be.

Earlier today the finance minister, the treasurer, the exchequer of the province, as my friend from Pembroke often calls him, gave a very glowing report of the economy in the province of Ontario. And times are good. During that discussion, he pointed out that albeit a few years behind, they're even looking forward to having a balanced budget. He reported that revenue is up.

It's very difficult to explain to teachers, teaching assistants, parents and children that when things are so great in Ontario, we have children with special needs who aren't being cared for properly. For example, the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, in the letter that they wrote to me, said that they will be about \$2 million short this year in special education funding. The Greater Essex County District School Board has

written to me and written to the Minister of Education that they will be \$2.5 million short in the area of special-needs education.

Now, the Minister of Education will get up and say, "We're spending more money in that area." That may be true. It's difficult for anybody to really determine what is true and what isn't that is sometimes spoken of in debate in this Legislature. It may be true that there's more money being spent on special education, but the problem, and what we can't seem to make the minister acknowledge, is that the needs are greater than the money being spent.

The Minister of Education sets the standard at which we assess these special education needs. The Minister of Education is the one that says: "You look at your student body, school boards, and according to these parameters, you tell us what your needs are." And then turns around and says: "I'm not going to give you any more money. I'm going to freeze the money, as a matter of fact, at what it was before."

That's all they're asking: that if they're assessed as having a need, then they have the expectation that the school board, through the funding that's provided by the province of Ontario—because the province controls all the educational spending—will be adequate to satisfy those needs.

1650

I've presented petitions from my riding in the Legislature over the last two weeks—close to 2,000 petitions in this respect. I have hundreds of letters being sent to me. I will read from one. It says:

"Dear sir:

"I am writing in regards to the funding cuts within the school system dealing with special-needs children. As a foster mother to four special-needs children I find this very concerning. The eldest child I currently care for is now 17 and if it wasn't for the efforts of teacher assistants and the specific organization of the programs that challenge these children to achieve far more than what was to be expected at the beginning of her education she would not be the mature, independent young lady she is today.

"These children deserve a chance to perform everyday tasks at the level of a normal child, and if it's a little extra attention or assistance that's needed for them to progress beyond their disabilities financial cuts should not be an option.

"The affection and dedication teacher assistants who work with special-needs children put into their daily activities is something to be admired, and the reduction of these exceptional people will in the long run hurt the learning process of many children who would thrive from a little extra assistance that a teacher doesn't have the needed time to provide for.

"In closing, on a more personal note the five-year-old boy who has cerebral palsy that is currently with me is an unbelievable character with the potential to become anything his heart desires. His incredible mind however needs some assistance when it comes to some motor

skills. The teacher's aide that has been helping him for just over a year now has broadened his potential and improved his capabilities in the time she has been with him. She is involved in many aspects of his life and has become a true friend to the whole family. To lose this special bond for one child would be horrible, but to lose it for many children would be tragic. The special-needs programs are essential for the development of Ontario's youth and funding for these programs cannot be cut."

I implore the Minister of Education to refrain from saying that we're just spending more money but, in this great economic boom that we're having, that the minister ask the Minister of Finance to provide at least adequate funding.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to join this debate to just go over some of the figures once again. It's kind of interesting how today, when we're dealing with third reading of Bill 14, the treasurer of Ontario also came out with his economic statement. I think it's appropriate to once again remind the people of Ontario that according to the government's own documents, the public debt of this province will have gone up by almost \$30 billion. In 1994-95 it was \$88.5 billion, and it's expected to be \$119.2 billion in the year 2000. The relevance of that is that we are saddling the younger generations with this debt.

I find it very fascinating in this day and age, when we are talking about reaching a balanced budget—and Ontario will be the last province to reach that—as to what should happen with the excess money. It's interesting that all you ever hear on the other side of the House is tax cuts. I say it's just as important to start paying down some of that public debt. It's just as important, if not more so: Again using the government's own figures, the number of dollars to be spent on paying the interest on the public debt is going to rise from \$9 billion just last year to \$9.3 billion; in other words, another \$300 million because of the extra debt that has been added on.

The other fact that I always find very interesting is that not only are we spending that much money on the public debt, but when you look at how much we spend on interest on the public debt each and every year in relation to how much we spend on social services in this province, anybody I speak to is quite amazed to find out that we spend more annually on interest payments on the public debt than we do on social services. The community and social services figure for the coming year will be \$7.8 billion. That's the budget and those are the people who benefit from that money who are always under attack—always, on a continual basis—from this government as they've tried to increase that ever-increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots in our society.

It's also interesting to see how the so-called economic boom has projected itself throughout the province of Ontario. The government has a very interesting chart in its own publication, on page 18. You will see that it outlines in five different areas where the job growth has taken place. You will see that by far the greatest job growth has taken place in the GTA. Not for a moment

would I deny to people that you need jobs here, that you want to see the growth here, but I think there has to be a realization by this government that northern Ontario and eastern Ontario, when you look at the job figures there—and I know they're smaller population bases—that the job increases there are much smaller. Those are the areas that need to grow. That's where we have the greatest unemployment.

My question is, what is the government doing about the ever-increasing disparity of economic benefits to the various regions of this province? I haven't heard of a program, I haven't heard a minister speak even for one moment in this House over the last five years as to what they're doing for those areas of the province that are outside of the GTA.

Yes, there has been economic growth. Of course, you like to take credit for it, which I think is a bit laughable. We all know that the American economy is mainly the reason for that. If it wasn't for a strong American economy and for the tremendous amount of exports that are currently going out from this province to the United States, we wouldn't see this kind of growth, and if it wasn't for some of the federal policies of Paul Martin, we wouldn't be seeing this kind of growth.

There is another very interesting article today in the *Toronto Star* that talks about the Canadian motor vehicle output. I guess in Ontario we produce about 92% of all the vehicles that are made in Canada. It talks about how figures show that Ontario produces almost as many vehicles now as Michigan. That's great. If our automobile industry grows in this province, we all benefit from that. But let's just look at the reasons.

One of the reasons that was given by the Bank of Nova Scotia, a Mr Gomes, who is the Bank of Nova Scotia—what is his title exactly? He is one of their directors and I'm trying to just find his title here. He's the bank's auto industry specialist. What does he give as the main reason as to why this economic growth is taking place here? He talks about how the output in Ontario "has surged alongside a competitive currency"—we all know that we have a low dollar which makes our automobile products much more in demand in the States—"and lower compensation costs than in the United States." We all can understand that.

But then the other reason he gives is, "Higher US health care expenses for employers account for much of the difference." I'd like the members on the government side just to listen to that. "Higher US health care expenses for employers account for much of the difference, Gomes noted," the Bank of Nova Scotia's auto industry expert.

What that means is that the health care system we have here in Ontario, which is supposed to help everyone when in need of medical services, as we all know, has a lesser cost than the American system. So I ask the government, why are they trying to do whatever they can to, in effect, Americanize our health care system? Why don't they make the health care system here in Ontario stronger, making sure, for example, that people who need

cancer radiation treatment will get it within the four-week time period that's prescribed for them, whereas now only 32%, or less than one in three patients, get it within the required period of time? Why don't they do whatever they can to build up that system? Here we have a leading automobile industry expert saying that's one of the reasons why we are competitive: because of our excellent health care system. In my opinion and in the opinion of many people, that is simply not happening.

1700

The other very fascinating statement that was contained in the treasurer's economic statement was the following, and I think the people of Ontario should put their minds to this. It states:

"The federal government has required that provincial personal income tax systems use the federal definition of taxable income. This limits our flexibility"—the government's flexibility—"in designing tax systems to meet the specific needs of Ontario taxpayers. Ontario is no longer willing to accept federally imposed constraints—constraints from an earlier era of federal dominance ..."

This is the relevant part: "Ontario will move to a 'tax on income' system"—which presumably is different from the taxable income system the federal government currently has—"in which Ontario's personal income tax will no longer be linked to federal tax and subject to the hidden tax increases in the federal system. A 'tax on income' system would preserve the benefits Ontario taxpayers have gained from this government's tax cuts."

Do you know what that's all about? They basically want to set up their own tax system here, with their own rules and regulations. I find it absolutely preposterous to even contemplate that the government is thinking about that. This is the government that has talked about cutting red tape. They talk about it in their economic statement and how wonderful you've done to cut red tape. What are you doing? Thirty or 40 years of a blended tax system that we've had in this country, where at least we might disagree from time to time as to what should or should not be taxable income, but there has been one definition that has been applied to both the federal and provincial scene, and now you want to set up your own system.

Do you know the reason why? I'll tell you why. As we know, the federal government is now starting to produce budget surpluses. Undoubtedly, one of the things that the federal government will do, in addition to paying down on the debt, in addition to putting more money into much-needed programs, is lower some of the tax rates. I've got no problem with that. Once you've got the budget balanced, you should be looking at lowering tax rates. If the federal government were to lower the tax rates under the current system, the province wouldn't get any credit. This all has to do with who gets credit for any tax cuts, and so for that, we are setting up a whole new taxation system in Ontario. I think that is an awful, awful shame.

You talk about red tape. The Income Tax Act already has, I don't know, 10,000, 20,000 pages, and probably just as many decided cases as to what is and is not this,

that or the other thing. Now you're just going to duplicate that situation by setting up your own tax on income system rather than an income tax system.

I hope that we will have the opportunity to debate this issue, not only here but also out in the general public, because anything you have ever said about cutting red tape, of which I am in complete favour—I believe that red tape ought to be cut. People ought to know where they stand, whether they're developers or whether they're individuals dealing with government—local, provincial, federal, what have you. Nobody wants to see undue delays. But you are going to lose whatever credibility you ever had in cutting red tape if you, in effect, are going to set up a taxation system that is going to rival the federal government's taxation system. It's going to be expensive and it is totally and absolutely inexcusable.

The final point that I want to make, because I do want to leave some time later on for our finance critic, is on the housing starts. The government takes great pride in the fact that the housing starts this year are 24% higher than last year. Of course we don't know what the figures were last year, we don't know what the figures were the year before, but it's kind of interesting when you take a look at where these housing starts are taking place.

You may recall that there was a press conference held here on November 3, which was attended by Marion Dewar, the former mayor of Ottawa; John Sweeney, the former provincial Minister of Housing, Liberal minister in the Peterson years; and Alan Redway, the former federal Minister of Housing. I believe in one of the earlier Mulroney governments. They did a housing report and they urged both the federal and provincial governments—and I don't for a moment suggest that it's just this government's problem, because I think it's just as much the federal government's problem—to get back into the social housing field, something that I thoroughly believe in and have been involved in over the last 25 years. I think it is totally and absolutely indefensible for the two senior levels of government to completely get out of the social housing field.

What do they say the real problem is with respect to housing? They're saying that it may well be that there are as a result of the increased activity in the economy further housing starts taking place, but when you look at what kind of housing has been built over the last number of years, they say that in Ontario as a whole—and I'm reading from their report that was issued here by these three eminent people who have been involved in the housing field from all three political parties—only 2%, two out of every hundred houses that are being built are for rental accommodation. Most new rental development in Ontario over the last five years has been geared to the ownership market. What does that mean? Yes, houses are being built, and they should be, but there are no houses being built for the people who are most vulnerable and who rely, for whatever reason, on government services. Again, we have that ever-widening gap between the haves and the have-nots.

So I say yes, the economy of Ontario is obviously looking up, but it is very sporadic. The GTA has benefited but certainly not the outer reaches of Ontario and certainly not the most vulnerable in our society.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm pleased this afternoon to stand up in the House and explain the perspective of the people from my riding with regard to the budget bill. We've heard at great length the members of the government share with us how they perceive the tax cuts included in their budget forecasts have actually improved the quality of life for the people of Ontario. I have to say that in the month of May, as I was going door to door in my riding and talking to the people who live in eastern Ontario, many of them had very great concern about the quality of their life and how things had changed.

They would say to me that tax cuts were not even noticed in many families. Yes, they may have paid less Ontario income tax; however, in many communities in my riding municipal taxes were increased. That was a direct result of the downloading of services from the province. Rural municipalities were required to pay for services that their tax base really made it very difficult for them to provide to the people in their areas.

Constituents told me that they were penalized by more user fees for garbage and so on, the facilities they once used at very reasonable cost. They had to pay more money for minor hockey and figure skating and those sorts of activities. People in my riding told me that those constituents who had students at university and colleges were paying significantly higher tuition fees. So whatever they might have received in additional money from income tax went out of the other hand to pay higher tuition fees.

1710

There has been a significant reduction of government services in rural Ontario, most especially in my riding. In my riding, offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources closed. These were offices that provided services in areas that need those services. Now constituents must drive some distance in order to avail themselves of the services that they require from the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Ministry of Transportation offices have closed across my riding and across the province. We are now faced with the very serious problem that people who need drivers' licence tests are not able to access this important services for many months. In my riding right now, people are making appointments for the months of April and May 2000, and one report to me was as late as August. These are teenagers. These are young people who are looking for jobs in some cases. Whether they can either acquire or maintain a job depends on whether or not they have a valid driver's licence, and they are not able to access that test for many months.

Also, seniors have come to me in my riding. They have indicated that they are not able to be tested for many months. They don't know if they're going to be able to continue to stay in their homes. If they don't have a driver's licence, that could be a very serious challenge or

problem, and they won't have that uncertainty confirmed for many months when they might be able to get a test scheduled.

That is a direct result of the budget plan of this government. They want to cut services so they can provide a tax cut. I maintain, ladies and gentlemen, you get what you pay for. The government has a responsibility to provide services to the taxpayers. They have a responsibility to manage the finances of the province responsibly. I don't think it's responsible, because the people of Ontario have worked hard for their money with the expectation that when they need a government service it will be there, and it is not.

I believe over the years the people who work on behalf of the government have taken great pride in providing these services to the people. Now there's great frustration and there's great demoralization in the government service, because they are overloaded, they are overworked, and they recognize that they can't meet the demand. They're the ones taking it on the chin every day.

For the people in my riding, there's some great sympathy for the people they engage at the government offices. When is the government going to realize we have a responsibility to provide services to the people?

In rural Ontario, certainly in my riding, the people have indicated very clearly that they value those services. It's not appropriate to ignore the needs of the people in a particular part of the province, as I believe this government and this budget will do if it is supported.

I say to the members of the House today, we need to recognize that tax cuts are important and necessary when they can be afforded. But what price are we paying for the tax cuts that Ontarians have today? We're paying for it directly with service to the people, and in many cases people who would need it the most.

For that reason I am not going to be able to support the budget bill. I believe that the people in my riding have given me very clear direction in terms of what they think are priorities for our area. I would say to the government, you need to look at the people of Ontario and the kinds of services that they've valued over the years and that they continue to need. In rural Ontario, it's in the area of agriculture and food, in the area of transportation. Again, municipalities need more support to address the downloading of services that has been placed upon them.

I thank you very much for the time this afternoon and the attention on this matter.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me begin by, first of all, commenting on the previous speaker. I realize she's a new member here, and I think she's doing a fine job representing her constituents here. But again, I have to take exception to this line of argument from the Liberals that we saw all the way through the last election, and we continue to see here now, where they stand up and they argue against the tax cut, like New Democrats. To hear them talk, you'd think it was the root of all evil and that there's no way that ought to be allowed to stand. Then, when you asked them

what they were going to do about it during the course of the last election, which is when things really mattered, what did they say? "Nothing. We would leave Mike Harris's economic Blueprint in place."

Mr Gerretsen: Not true.

Mr Christopherson: It is absolutely true, I say to the member for Kingston and the Islands. By the same token you were also arguing there has to be more reinvestment in education and more reinvestment in health care, but you never really showed where the money was going to come from.

Mr Gerretsen: Yes, we did.

Mr Christopherson: No, you didn't. You talked like Tories. You said "efficiencies" and you'd change the way of doing things and a whole lot of gobbledygook. But the fact is that you cannot in all good conscience say you want to reinvest in health care and education, which is primarily where the Tories took the money in order to pay for their tax cut, without reversing at least a portion of the tax cut. What is incredible is that you seem to have no shame about it. You'll just continue to say that the tax cut is wrong, but you say to the people of Ontario that if you form the government, the tax cut stays. You can't have it both ways.

As much as the Liberals might look to Jean Chrétien and say, "Gee, maybe you can have it both ways," the reality is that you can't. That's why, for the second time in a row, when you offer up a little milder or different version of what the Tories are offering, you don't beat them. You've got to offer an alternative.

I won't suggest that our alternative was such a smashing electoral success, as I look around at our caucus seats. However, I feel a great deal of pride, having been in government, that we knew the importance of showing that if we're going to invest billions of dollars in health care and billions of dollars into the education system, the money has to come from somewhere.

We said that the top 6% of income earners in Ontario, who are receiving 25% of the tax cut, could afford to put some of that money back so that we could maintain—or re-establish, actually—the education system that we were so proud of. That gave us the economy that you take all the credit for, in large part—the health care system that not only provided the best health care in the world, I say to the Chair of Management Board, but also gave us an edge in terms of competition, particularly in the auto industry, vis-à-vis what we see in the United States.

You feel that it's OK to privatize all of that because you know that portion of the population you care about the most, those who have already significant wealth and power and influence, can afford to buy private health care if you smash and grind the system into the ground. But the reality is that the vast majority of people can't.

I am still surprised at how people react when they find out that fully 25% of the money that was given back out of our health care and education system goes to the top 6% of income earners—25% of the benefit goes to 6% of the population.

By the way, that 6% of the population now enjoys not just 25% of the benefit; the figure is now over 36%. So when my friend from Wentworth-Burlington talks about growing the economy, he ought to be talking about the growing gap between those who already have and those who don't. The evidence is there. Take someone who makes \$250,000 a year. For anyone watching this who thinks they did quite fine with \$50 or \$100 a month or whatever in a tax cut, think about those people who are attending some of these Tory fundraisers who are making \$250,000 a year. Do you know much they took home? Around \$26,000. It's not a wonder that they're a fan of your agenda. And now that figure has increased. They're getting 36%.

1720

What's upsetting is that we are now seeing the reports that are showing and confirming that we have more and more poor people than we've ever had before. How come none of you have mentioned that? While you were standing up today beating your chests about your economic statement, not one of you talked about the victims of these policies.

Let me tell you, there are an awful lot of middle-class working families who are looking around and realizing: "You know what? Yes, I'm going somewhere, but the odds of me going up are not nearly as likely as the odds of my standard of living and quality of life going down."

These are the people who can't afford a private health care system, and they can't afford a private education system. They need the kind of education system we had that provided us with some of the most skilled workers in the world and a health care system that was envied by countries around the world.

In their statements today, a couple of members referred to the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, and I mentioned this briefly earlier and I just want to expand on it a bit. All along, when we've pointed out that there is this significant amount of money available from this tax cut, this tax scam—the 25% of this benefit that's going to 6% of the population, that's now 36%. They're getting the lion's share. When we raise this issue, the government has consistently said, "Oh, you know, the opposition is talking about the fact that we reduced the income tax rate for the very wealthy and yet we're getting more money in taxation revenue than we ever got before." That has been their statement.

On page 55 of the document released today, top item under "Taxation Revenue; personal income tax," the projected outlook for 1999-2000 is over \$1 billion less. The reality is, whether you like it or not, and how much you try to put it down doesn't matter, had you not brought in this tax scam that gives so much more to the wealthy than it does to the average person and literally nothing to those of modest income, your numbers are showing that if you hadn't done this we could have balanced the budget at least two years ago and we wouldn't have had to make one cut.

If you just take the numbers from your own document and extrapolate them from when you took power, the

reality is—you may find it discomfoting; it's meant to be that way—that if you had not given that massive tax cut to your wealthy friends, you wouldn't have had to make one dollar in cuts in government spending anywhere and the budget would have been balanced two years ago.

Why wouldn't they do that? Because they made promises. They brag about keeping their promises. They made promises to their wealthy friends that "When you back us, give us all the money and all the clout and all the third-party help that you can during the election, look what's in it for you if we get elected." Yes, you kept that promise. But look at the price we're paying.

The headline in the *Hamilton Spectator* today is, "Hospitals Will Stack Patients." We've got kids with special needs in the Hamilton area who are still not getting the support they need to get the education they are entitled to and that they deserve. Why? Because you cut transfer payments to our school boards.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, that's the reality. You cut the money—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Well, we're going to get into this shell game again. That's fine. Let's go there. I'd love to go there. Let's get into this classroom spending stuff again, the shell game you have going on there, where you redefined what is classroom spending and you carved out as much as you can so there are only a few things left. More and more people are beginning to realize that some of the things that aren't left couldn't possibly be related to classroom spending, like lighting the room or heating it or cleaning it. Those don't count. That's not classroom spending.

Transportation: millions of dollars cut across the province. It's a significant issue in my community, and I'm in one of the most urban ridings in the province. Move out to the rural areas and these transportation costs leap exponentially. But you could cut that, and you have, to whatever degree you want. The same with custodial costs, the cleaning of classrooms: You have hacked away at that. But because you've changed the definition of classroom spending and put a bit of money into those areas, you can accurately, if somewhat deceptively, say, "We've increased classroom spending." Yet the bottom line is that on a per capita basis less money is being spent in our school system now than when you took power. You can't pull this tax cut money from nowhere. It's got to come from somewhere. We're talking billions—between \$5 billion and \$6 billion a year—and education and health care are the big budget items. So of course there's big money coming out of there.

And you don't mention again the fact that you've cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. God almighty, could you imagine what would have happened if he had said to anybody earning more than a quarter of a million dollars a year, "Your income will be cut by over 20%"? The roof would have caved in. But it's OK to go after the poor in Harris's Ontario. It's OK to stand

up, as the former Minister of Housing did, and say, "We're getting out of the business of housing and I'm proud of it." I wonder how proud he is now, and how proud the rest of you are, with the number of people who are homeless. But then as a rule they don't vote, do they?

The problem is that more and more people, through conscience, are having a lot of difficulty continuing or choosing to ignore the plight of the most vulnerable in one of the wealthiest states in the world. I think that's why you've got a gender-gap problem. The women in Ontario who may have supported you in the past are beginning to feel more and more uneasy recognizing that that's somebody's son lying in a doorway and somebody's daughter on the street, and that you've done the opposite of what a wealthy province like ours should be doing. That's what's so frustrating when we hear the speeches we heard today about how wonderful everything is.

How else did you pay for it? You changed the legislation on environmental protection, negating and gutting decades of improvement in protecting our environment. Why? To protect the health of our children. You have done more damage in one term in government than one would have thought humanly possible. You have decimated that ministry. You've laid off staff—there's nobody there to do the inspections and enforce the rules. And since you've watered down the rules, it makes it that much easier to justify not having the inspectors. That's what you've done. It's interesting.

1730

Before I leave this document, let me point out that in the same category it talks about taxation revenue, where I pointed out that the government is projecting that in the next year we're going to receive \$1 billion less from personal income tax. I don't think for a minute there are very many people watching saying, "Well, yes, a big chunk of that billion must be mine." Most people aren't noticing it. What they are noticing are the cuts in services and access to services in their communities.

What else do we find in here? I just found it passing strange that if you looked at the preferred share dividends tax, a line item I'm sure the vast majority of people would be quite familiar with—not. They don't have enough money for preferred shares, certainly not in Mike Harris's Ontario. What's happening? What are they showing here? What happens to the revenue line from preferred share dividends tax? Well, surprise, surprise. It's going down. How about that? It was \$65 million 1995-96, then it shot up to \$73 million in 1996-97. That must be right about the time the massive lobbying started, because then it drops to \$60 million in the next year, \$50 million the next year, and your projection is \$35 million the year after. Yet you have the gall to tell me, and everybody else in Ontario, that the rich are not getting richer in Mike Harris's Ontario and that the poor aren't getting poorer and that the middle class are not slowly but surely dropping and sliding in terms of their standard of living and their quality of life.

You know, just because you stand up in this House and say it doesn't make it so, doesn't make it true, doesn't make it reality. Every time we get a report, whether it's the auditor's report, whether it's the report on poverty, whether it's the growing gap—and they're due for an update; that'll be interesting to have a good look at. All these studies seem to prove the opposite of what you say, and you wonder why we react the way we do to the things you say in this place.

I was listening as best I could, tending to other things, to comments from the government members. I know that certainly my friend from Wentworth-Burlington, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and others talked about what's going on in other provinces. Certainly my colleague from the adjacent riding to me talked about, "If you want to look for the worst disaster,"—or words to that effect—"look where there's an NDP government." Yet he always overlooks the fact that it was the NDP government of Saskatchewan that was the first province in the modern economic era to balance the budget. They did it after Tories had left an economic disaster. I realize that a lot of these things have to do with who the individual leader is, who the people are who make up these caucuses and governments at the time, but that's not the approach my friend took. My friend took the approach that if it's NDP, then obviously there can't be anything good economically. I suppose the opposite of that would be that if it's Tory, then it must be good management. Well, again, those are words; that's not the reality. The reality is something completely different.

I would remind the member that, yes, Saskatchewan takes great pride in being the first province in all of North America, not just Canada, to bring in universal health care, but they take equal pride in the fact that under Tommy Douglas, after 16 years of continuous power—they won every election over the course of 16 years—they brought in a balanced budget every year. Why? Two reasons: Tommy said, number one, "I'm not going to bring in a universal health care system that has the side effect of making the banks wealthier than they are." Secondly, he said, "I'm going to bring it in and ensure that it's so economically sound that future governments wouldn't dream of stepping in and killing it."

Tommy faced a lot of heat from his own party, his own party activists, because bringing in universal health care had been a platform for a long time in Saskatchewan and with the national party. He took tremendous heat from activists who said: "Tommy, you've been in office four, eight, 12, 13, 14 years. Bring in universal health care." But he waited. He waited until the 15th year of his premiership, until he was satisfied that the province could pay for it and that it was sustainable. Didn't he see things correctly?

More recently, when the NDP won the last election in Manitoba just a couple of months ago, the new NDP government brought in an outside firm to take a look at the books, because Manitobans had elected a Tory government previous to this last election and the Tories

brought in that much-touted, wonderful economic magic wand that Harris likes to brag about: balanced budget legislation. You bring in balanced budget legislation and never again can we get into the situations that we've seen in the past. It guarantees it can't happen.

By the way, if you look at all the different types of balanced budget legislation that exist across Canada, Manitoba is the one that almost perfectly patterns what Mike Harris has introduced. So it's fair to ask the question: If they've got this great balanced budget legislation just like what Mike Harris introduced, and Mike Harris says all these wonderful things about what this balanced budget legislation will do, then, hey, when the NDP came into power, everything must have been just fine, right? Wrong.

The government—and I give them full marks for doing this—hired an outside agency, a well-respected firm, outside of government, outside of the influence of any of the parties, to come in and do an objective analysis of the books of the province of Manitoba.

What did they find? Well, much like when the Liberals were in power in the early part of 1990—and when we took over, there was supposed to be a \$25-million surplus which, once we took a look at all the books and took a look in all the corners, became close to a \$3-billion deficit—the Tories had said there was going to be a surplus of \$21.4 million. The numbers are almost the same. What did the outside consulting agency find? A deficit of between \$262 million and \$417 million. So what did the balanced budget legislation do? It made for a great showpiece, but all it did was cause the Tories to hide the money in other pockets, in other accounts, in other line items in the budget.

That's why I raised earlier the fact that in the United States the National Conference of State Legislatures did an analysis of what states had done where they had balanced budget legislation, and they came up with a whole raft of methods and tricks and shell games that governments were using to get around the legislation. Why? Because it makes far better PR than it does economic policy.

I'll leave it to the Liberals to defend why they supported Mike Harris's balanced budget legislation in the face of evidence that shows that it doesn't do what it purports to do, but I think the point is important to make.

It's also interesting, I thought—and I'm looking at a CP article released November 17 this year, just a number of days ago. The managing partner, Mr Calvin Buss, said of what the new NDP government has to do—if you'll bear with me, Mr Speaker, you'll see it's relevant: "The province either has to increase their revenue or reduce their expenditures," he said. "Those are the only two ways to actually balance the financial position for the province."

Isn't it interesting that they didn't say, "The number one thing that they ought to do in Manitoba is cut their revenue." He said maybe they ought to cut their expenditures or increase their revenue or some combination of the two, but he never mentioned cutting taxes.

1740

I would have thought that if your claim that cutting taxes automatically makes everything just peachy keen in terms of the economy, they would have recommended that. Why do you think they didn't recommend that? Might it be that it doesn't make a whole lot of sense that when you're in a deficit position as we've been in Ontario and they are now in Manitoba, if you want to balance the budget, the first thing you don't do is cut \$6 billion out of your revenue source? I think so.

When we hear the government members stand up and talk about how wonderful they are and how knowledgeable they are, let's just take a look around for the evidence that tells the real story. Manitoba is about as good an example as you're going to find in terms of the reality of the economic direction this government has taken.

I'm going to say this. Again, I know the backbenchers get upset about it, but you can't hide from these things. It's true. One of you said—this is so arrogant: "The debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs."

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I knew you were going to all say—I could have predicted it. I'm surprised you didn't applaud. I was sort of waiting for that part when I made that statement. The fact of the matter is, it's arrogant. How arrogant of any of you to suggest, "The debate is over." Where the hell do you think you are? Harris is the Premier, not the Pope. It's an arrogant thing to say.

Secondly, I don't believe it's true. There's a legitimate debate out there, at the very least, about whether or not what you're saying is the truth. There are economists who argue that the reason—and this was pointed out by the Liberal finance critic earlier today, that your credit rating is no better than it was when we were in the depths of the recession, struggling with that, and here you are going through the biggest economic boom North America's ever seen in our history and you didn't move up that credit rating one iota. Why? Because you cut your revenue source, your revenue stream, at a time when you were trying to balance the budget.

The reality is that our economy is doing well—and it is—largely because of the exports that are going out of Canada. Where's the demand for those exports being generated? In the United States. Everybody understands that it's the American economy that's driving ours. The second their economy catches a bit of a sniffle, we're going to get pneumonia. That moment is going to happen, unfortunately.

You cannot continue to expand, expand. At least historically, there is absolutely no evidence of a continuing sustainable expansion like this that just goes on forever. At some point, there's a day of reckoning. That's why I worry about the balanced budget legislation, because I think you'll hide behind that and when that day of reckoning comes, it'll be, once again, the same people you've hit earlier: the vulnerable, the middle class, our communities, the environment, municipalities, students, the disabled, on and on, who are going to face the wrath

of you cutting to meet your so-called phony balanced budget legislation.

I would say to you that you might want to stop this arrogance of "The debate is over." The debate is not over. It's far from over. There are an awful lot of us and a lot of people who have a lot more knowledge and credibility, quite frankly, and experience in economics than myself who will argue strongly that the tax cut was exactly the wrong thing to do at the time you did it. The reason you got away with it was because there was so much bounce and boom to our economy because of its attachment to the American economy, "which is truly defying gravity," to quote my leader Howard Hampton.

I want to talk a bit about a copy of a letter that I got, dated today. It's addressed to Minister Eves and it's signed by David Bragg, who is the president of Loblaw Properties Ltd. I am assuming this is a legitimate letter. If it's not, then I will duly apologize at the appropriate time, but it certainly gives every reason to believe so.

This is about the actual bill, Bill 14. What do they say? It's interesting. To be fair, overall they're clearly supportive of the government, they're clearly supportive of your economic framework and your tax policy. To be fair, they make reference to that and I acknowledge that right up front. They are supporters of your overall direction. But they do say, and this a letter dated today regarding this bill, exactly this bill:

"However, we have strong concerns that proposed changes to the Assessment Act," which is of course one of the pieces of this omnibus bill, "will be a step backward and will put power in the hands of civil servants to regulate against the interest of the taxpayers. We assume that your government intends to pass detailed regulations, which would provide for a process to protect a fair and equitable assessment system, however, it is our understanding from your office that detailed regulations do not presently exist. Without seeing those detailed regulations, we cannot support the government in making the proposed changes.

"The proposed amendments to the Assessment Act contained in section 19 of the Assessment Act, namely the addition of sections 19(2.1) and 19(2.2) if misused, which the present drafting definitely would allow, are completely in contradiction to the attainment of a fair and equitable assessment system. These sections could be used to penalize individual taxpayers without proper means of objection through the appeal process. They could also create inequity between competitors in a given sector and create uncertainty for investors.

"We have been advised that there is no other jurisdiction in North America with legislation that provides such wide discretionary tax powers without included due process to individual taxpayers."

It's funny how the government gets quiet when I'm reading from a business person's letter. However, to continue:

"We do not believe that this is a fair or appropriate approach for Ontario nor is it a necessity at this point in time.

"We strongly urge you to withdraw these sections from the bill until proper consideration can be given as to how the legislation and/or regulations will protect taxpayers from arbitrary and unfair assessments."

When you boil that down, it's my understanding that what it means is that the way you calculate CVA can be different for individual properties and that the government or staff would have the ability to identify these individual properties and assess them differently. Hence Mr Bragg's concern about a potential unfair advantage to competitors and that the uncertainty may spook investors.

Are we going to have time to deal with what seems like a very legitimate concern? Regardless of your philosophical bent, when someone argues that the legislation you're proposing could cause unfairness, inequity, all kinds of concerns—they've done some homework on this, looking at other jurisdictions—when that's raised, we all pay attention to pay it. It doesn't matter then whether you're a New Democrat, a Liberal or a Tory, when you're here as a parliamentarian and you hear a concern like that, you want to do something. Is that going to happen? No. Why? Another one of the jewels in Mike Harris's crown is all the undemocratic changes to the rules in this place. We're now bound by a time allocation motion, and this debate, this bill, democracy as it relates to Bill 14, ends in about six or seven minutes, because the government deemed it so.

1750

So these concerns may or may not get addressed in the regulations, but they certainly aren't in the legislation itself, because the legislation is about to become law, save and except the rubber stamp of the LG, in a matter of minutes. Are the regulations going to alleviate the concern that Mr Bragg raises? I don't know. Unless the member from Wentworth-Burlington wants to tell me that Mr Bragg has his information wrong and that indeed he has a copy of the regulations in his pocket, it would appear the regulations are not written and we don't know. So you will use your majority to pass this and you won't know whether or not the concerns raised by Mr Bragg are going to be met, because there has been absolutely no time to do that. Normally we do it in committee, but this government doesn't believe much in committee any more.

Laws passed through here from years ago, people just catching on now, their eyes light up, they're just shocked, they say, "What do you mean that happened?" Oh yeah, during all that tumultuous change, all the trouble and the thing we had, that was one of those bills that just didn't get a whole lot of attention. Massive changes in this province have happened that way. Here's an example of it happening right in front of our eyes, and not one of these backbenchers sitting here is doing or can do anything about it, not a thing.

In the few moments I have left, I want to just focus on a couple of things; one is a reminder, again, that one of the tricks this government played—and it really was a trick they played on the public, and an area where they have broken a promise. The government promised in the

Common Sense Revolution—and I'm quoting directly from the Common Sense Revolution document—"The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt." The debt, of course, is over \$120 billion now because they gave the tax cut and they weren't able to balance the budget soon enough, so they had to borrow enough money to keep the whole thing going while they gave all those billions of dollars to their wealthy friends. So this is \$80 billion as written when they took power, not the over \$120 billion that we have now, thanks to the wonderful management of Harris and company.

They said they would take every dime from any asset sale. Last year—I believe it was this year, 1999, calendar 1999, but it could be 1998—there was a bill passed that allowed for the sale of Highway 407, and \$3.1 billion was generated. With the Common Sense Revolution promise there, that \$3.1 billion went straight on to the debt. Right, Speaker? Absolutely, because they said in the Common Sense Revolution if they sold any assets, that money would go—what were the words? "Every penny." So we know \$3.1 billion must have gone right on to that debt. It must have gone straight into lowering the debt, because Mike Harris says that he always keeps his promises.

Gee, that didn't happen. You know what they did with that \$3.1 billion? They used it to make their projected budget for 1999-2000 look better. How did they do that? They took the whole \$3.1 billion and showed it as revenue. They counted it as revenue. Now we know that they've got to make up that money, because there's not another 407 to sell. Now we know they're on a selling spree.

Interjection: Want to buy another highway?

Mr Christopherson: Want to buy a hospital? Want to buy a university? Hey, want to buy a community? There's Mike Harris standing on the corner selling out all of our inheritance that we received from our parents and grandparents, all of it going. Why? So they can support the phony numbers that are in your budgets.

What did we see the other day? I have a little less than two minutes left. Background, detailed information on government savings. Here we go again, more words, their descriptions. What does it mean? It means \$300 million is being cut again, and that's only step one. Ultimately, they're going to cut at least \$900 million. Why? Because they've got to pay for the next bloody tax cut they're giving to their wealthy friends.

What are some of the things they're looking at? There's a reduction in provincial grants to nine cultural agencies. I heard the PA for finance earlier bragging about what they did for the film industry. Well, go take a look at what they're doing to the rest of the culture in Ontario as they cut to give money back to their wealthy friends. Remember, this is only \$300 million. They have to find at least \$900 million. We suspect that the number they need is much higher because they have to make up for the \$3.1 billion they don't have because there's not

another Highway 407 to sell, and that's assuming the economy stays as buoyant as it is. If that starts to fall, the number of dollars cut in order to continue feeding this gift to their wealthy friends goes higher.

I'll just list some of them in the seconds I have left. They're downloading non-profit housing program administration on to municipalities, another favour for the municipalities, more cuts to our services in municipalities.

OSAP: There's the word—they love these words—"cracking down." They're going to crack down on all those students, like they haven't already carried an unfair burden of your economics.

The municipalities are going to lose the 20% share of child care they used to receive from parent-paid child care fees. That's more downloading.

They're putting in place fees for the Family Responsibility Office, which my leader Howard Hampton took you to task for just a while ago. The reality is that everything this government says about the budget and the economy is only words. The reality is, Ontario is hurting.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to the order of the House dated Monday, November 29, I am now required to put the question.

Mr Skarica has moved third reading of Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

I have a letter from the chief government whip:

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 14, third reading, be deferred until Wednesday, December 1, 1999."

The vote is deferred.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The motion to adjourn the House deemed to be made, pursuant to standing 37(a), the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London has given notice of his dissatisfaction with an answer to a question given by the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation respecting an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. The member has up to five minutes, followed by five minutes allotted to the minister or her parliamentary assistant to respond.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): One week ago today, almost to the minute, this Legislature voted unanimously to enact a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act before two years had passed.

I was overjoyed that this resolution received such support from the members of all three parties. It was unfortunate that the Premier did not think the demands of 1.5 million people were important enough to vote on. I was happy, though, to see the Minister of Citizenship cast her vote in support of my resolution.

The government of Ontario has an obligation to act here. We have a moral responsibility to assist those among us who require aid to achieve success and self-actualization. An Ontarians with Disabilities Act will free 1.5 million people to live their lives to the full.

In her statement, the minister admitted that a new round of consultation is required when she said that, "... debate in this House and concerns expressed by people from the disability community made it very clear to the government that additional consultation and planning were required before we proceeded."

It is encouraging that the minister is meeting with groups to develop a formal consultation plan. Obviously her current schedule of meetings with groups is not a formal consultation. She is not asking for a written response to a proposal or a white paper. She is not asking for advice from the public or on the record. These meetings are closed-door, invitation-only discussions.

1800

However, the minister also made the farcical comment that it will be another year before we have any timeline toward the development of this act. In September the minister asked the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee for input on how this consultation process should go forward. In response, they sent a detailed letter that related their deep concerns about the consultation process her predecessor had employed. I concur in their recommendations and wish to reiterate those recommendations to the House today.

The consultation should be barrier-free and accessible, so that all persons with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of the consultation process. This includes holding meetings in accessible locations and ensuring that real-time captioning and sign language interpreters are available, providing material in all accessible formats.

The government should use as a starting point the 11 principles that the Ontario Legislature unanimously adopted on October 29, 1998, and the consultation should focus solely on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

The consultation should be truly public. Anyone who wants to participate should have the opportunity to present his or her view. It should not be an invitation-only process.

MPPs from all three parties should conduct the consultation, to help ensure a non-partisan and bipartisan effort. It should build on the fact that all three parties have expressed support for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Sufficient time must be given to those who want to participate and make their submissions.

Adequate time must be given for each presentation so that the people have a meaningful opportunity to be heard. The forums and the hearings should be conducted

across the province, with financial assistance provided for those who need to travel significant distances to reach centres where they are held.

Since people with disabilities have already waited more than four years for the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, the government should promptly finish designing this consultation and announce it as quickly as possible.

The government should introduce a new bill for debate in the Legislature within as short a period as possible after the completion of this consultation. After the new bill is introduced in the Legislature, the Legislature should hold public hearings on the bill. The procedure for those hearings should comply with the principles set out in the document.

The consultation should be conducted, though, by an all-party select committee of the Legislature. The select committee would hold public hearings in centres across this province, and they should be designed to achieve the goal of a barrier-free Ontario.

My question, to which I was unsatisfied with the response, is that this consultation process should be in accordance with the 11 principles the Legislature unanimously approved on October 29, 1998. Will the minister or her representative commit immediately to striking such a committee? Yes or no?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Thank you very much for the opportunity for me, on behalf of my minister, to address the House during this adjournment debate.

The House will know that exactly a week ago all sides of this House agreed to a resolution calling on the government to implement an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within two years. This was the latest reaffirmation of the government's commitment to implement an ODA. We promised it in 1995, repeated that promise in April in the 1999 throne speech and again when Her Excellency the Lieutenant Governor opened the 37th Parliament in October.

In the Common Sense Revolution we promised to treat the disabled with dignity. We took them off the welfare rolls, where they didn't belong, and established a program—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): You didn't do anything. You should be ashamed of yourself.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mrs Elliott: We kept our promise.

I remind members of the House and the public that the opposition parties each had a chance to address the barriers faced by Ontario's disabled community. The Liberals did nothing during their term of office. The NDP left it to a backbencher to introduce legislation and then let that opportunity languish on the order paper.

The timeframe this government agreed to last Tuesday is tighter than that proposed by the leader of the official opposition in the leadup to last June's general election. Apparently the opposition has more faith in us to get it done than they had in their action plan. I guess they are acknowledging what the people of Ontario acknowledged on June 3, that the Liberals are just not up to the job.

I can assure members of the opposition that their faith in us is not misplaced. This government has made significant advances to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities and to create opportunities for all members of our society. We have announced over half a billion dollars for disability programs since taking office in 1995, and I listed many of them in my remarks last Tuesday. The people of Ontario have come to know that we keep our promises, and we shall keep this one.

Despite all the noise coming from the opposition benches, we are the only government in the history of this province to have ever introduced an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It was the first, it was the most comprehensive and, as I said earlier, it is a record they cannot match. The government's commitment could not be clearer.

As we have worked towards legislation, we have provided incentives to employers to encourage them to make their businesses more accessible. We have taken the disabled individuals off the welfare rolls, invested in programs like attendant care, and developed other programs to assist those who are willing and able to work.

Earlier this year, major program and funding announcements to assist children with disabilities and their families included \$20 million in annual funding for the enhancement of children's mental health services; \$5 million, increasing to \$19 million annually, for intensive early intervention programs for two- to five-year-olds with autism; and additional funding of \$17 million for up to 1,700 families caring for medically fragile or technologically dependent children.

I want to be clear in this opportunity we have that we are planning to undertake a strategy to address the barriers that face Ontarians. We know that this is desirable and this is needed, but it must be balanced, it must be practical and it would be wrong to set standards or raise expectations to a level that can't be met.

An Ontario disabilities act and action plan is not going to fall from the sky; it's going to take a lot of hard work. This government has committed to doing that work, and we do keep our promises.

The Acting Speaker: It being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1807.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

CONTENTS

Tuesday 30 November 1999

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Young offenders	
Mr Young	919
Ipperwash Provincial Park	
Mr Phillips	919
Economic growth in Scarborough	
Ms Mushinski	920
Neighbour to Neighbour Centre	
Mrs Bountrogianni	920
Newmarket Stingrays	
Mrs Munro	920
Doctor shortage	
Mr Hoy	920
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Christopherson	921
Allan Baker	
Mr Stewart	921

FIRST READINGS

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 23, Mrs Witmer	
Agreed to	921
Mrs Witmer	921

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Economic outlook	
Mr Eves	922
Mr Phillips	924
Mr Hampton	925
Mr Christopherson	925

ORAL QUESTIONS

Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre	
Mrs Pupatello	925
Mr Sampson	926
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Bartolucci	926
Mr Clement	927
Mr Agostino	927
Cancer treatment	
Ms Lankin	928
Mrs Witmer	928
Sports facility taxation	
Mr Hampton	928
Mr Eves	929
Road maintenance	
Mr Gravelle	929
Mr Turnbull	929
Ontario Place	
Mr Young	930
Mr Jackson	930
Contaminated landfill	
Ms Di Cocco	930
Mr Clement	930

Control of smoking

Mr Galt	931
Mrs Witmer	931

Toronto council

Mr Marchese	931
Mr Clement	932

Education funding

Mr Kennedy	932
Mrs Ecker	932

Ontario Summer Games

Mr O'Toole	933
Mrs Johns	933

Montfort Hospital

Mrs Boyer	934
Mrs Witmer	934
Mr Baird	934

Extension of drinking hours

Mr Johnson	934
Mr Runciman	934

Lottery and casino corporation offices

Mr Martin	935
Mr Hodgson	935

PETITIONS

Doctor shortage

Mr Bradley	935
------------------	-----

Occupational health and safety

Mr Christopherson	935, 937
-------------------------	----------

Marriage

Mr Tilson	936
-----------------	-----

Education funding

Mr Crozier	936
------------------	-----

Road maintenance

Mr Gravelle	936
-------------------	-----

School closures

Mr Ruprecht	936
-------------------	-----

Northern health travel grant

Mr Gravelle	937
-------------------	-----

Emergency services

Mr Ruprecht	937
-------------------	-----

SECOND READINGS

More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999, Bill 14,

<i>Mr Eves</i>	
Agreed to	938

THIRD READINGS

More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999, Bill 14,

<i>Mr Eves</i>	
Mr Skarica	939
Ms Mushinski	942
Mr Dunlop	943
Mr Bradley	944
Mr Crozier	946

Mr Gerretsen	947
Mrs Dombrowsky	949
Mr Christopherson	950
Vote deferred	955

OTHER BUSINESS

Notice of dissatisfaction

The Speaker	938
-------------------	-----

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Ontarians with disabilities legislation

Mr Peters	955
Mrs Elliott	956

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Jeannine Séguin

M. Lalonde	919
------------------	-----

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, projet de loi 23, *M^{me} Witmer*

Adoptée	921
---------------	-----

QUESTIONS ORALES

Hôpital Montfort

<i>M^{me} Boyer</i>	934
<i>M^{me} Witmer</i>	934
M. Baird	934

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 réduisant de nouveau les impôts pour stimuler l'emploi, la croissance et la prospérité, projet de loi 14, *M. Eves*

Adoptée	938
---------------	-----

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 réduisant de nouveau les impôts pour stimuler l'emploi, la croissance et la prospérité, projet de loi 14, *M. Eves*

Vote deferred	955
---------------------	-----



No. 20B

N° 20B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 30 November 1999

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers



Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

The House met at 1848.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 23, 1999, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until Monday, April 3, 2000.

I believe that this motion before the House this evening to extend the sittings of this place is in the best interests of the Legislature, is in the best interests of the constituents of this province. We have a number of pieces of legislation that deserve the attention of this House; for example, the police pursuits legislation. We have an important piece of health care legislation yet to be considered, the Supply Act and so on.

I believe that part of making this House work properly is to ensure that the appropriate time is taken by all members of the House to consider the details of legislation, to ensure that it has proper debate, that it is extensively considered by the members of this House. Although I know there may be some concern on the part of some to be able to rise at the appointed time, as would be the normal course of events under our standing orders, it does behoove us to take whatever time is necessary to deal with the legislation that we have committed to as a government. It was in the Blueprint, which was our campaign commitment to the people of this province, where we committed to doing a number of things, not the least of which is to bring in legislation that would deal with issues such as community safety.

We committed to ensuring that we would shore up the ability of our police forces, for example, to deal with matters of community safety. The Solicitor General introduced a very key piece of legislation, the police pursuits act, and that will allow police services throughout this province to deal effectively with those people who choose not to obey the law, who choose for whatever reason to challenge the law and cause a police chase.

It's unfortunate in our time to read about a police chase having taken place, and there are more and more of them. I think the reason for that is that in the past there hasn't been sufficient support by governments of our police officers across this province for doing their job. It

has become acceptable to challenge authority. It has become acceptable to consider the words of a police officer of no greater import than perhaps those of a buddy and, in some cases, it is actually considered sport to challenge the authority whether it be of police officers or of teachers.

I think we have a problem that we have to address as a Legislature. We hear all too often about individuals breaking the law, not thinking twice about doing that, and it's starting at a very young age. In York region we have a young man who at the tender age of 16 was swarmed and beaten by a group of youths in Newmarket and today is still in hospital. We don't know if he will ever recover to his former self. We certainly hope and pray that he does. But we have to ask the question: Why is it that young people are prepared to break the law, to turn to violence and to disrespect another young person's life to the point where they're prepared to actually beat someone to the point where they're on the verge of losing their life?

In York North we also know of the recent tragedy of a young person. We all read about the funeral of this teenaged boy who was beaten to death. Forever, his life has been snuffed out and the life of his family has been changed, of his friends who went through and are going through the trauma of this experience. Why is it that we, in a province that has so many advantages, are experiencing these tragedies? I suggest to you the reason is that at some point along the way we've lost sight of respect for life, we've lost sight of respect for authority. Through this piece of legislation I believe the Solicitor General is sending a clear signal to people across this province that you must obey the law and that there will be serious consequences if you don't.

That is the kind of legislation we will be debating in this place. We will be talking about other legislation that deals with matters of municipal restructuring. One of the commitments that we made as a government is that we would promote more efficient government. You know well that over the years layer upon layer of government and bureaucracy has been allowed to develop. We're spending much more today on government than ever before, but if you ask people if they are getting better service today than they did 20 years ago, they'll say no. The question is, why, then, do we need a multiplicity of politicians, why do we need the layers of bureaucracy? What has happened?

As we experienced in the city of Toronto—an unpopular piece of legislation at the time with many—there

were many who objected to the amalgamation of those very mature cities that were all clustered around the city of Toronto at the time, each of them with their own city hall, each of them their own clusters of councils, and all of the staffing and bureaucracy that surrounds that; different communities with their own fire departments and often confusion about where the boundaries were and who was going to respond to a call. Experience now shows very clearly that to take the initiative of amalgamating those cities into the city of Toronto was the right thing to do. We are getting reports now of millions of dollars of savings as a result of the downsizing of the bureaucracy, and yet there is still a distance to go. We're not done with that yet. I think it's very clear still that there is room for improvement.

I think it behooves any government not to rest until we have done everything possible to make government more efficient, to deliver services at lower cost and to improve service while we're doing that. All of that is possible. We have an experience in Toronto as well as in other municipalities across the province. We've received reports from commissioners for the Ottawa-Carleton area. We've received reports for Sudbury, as well as Haldimand-Norfolk and the Hamilton area. We will be reviewing those reports and we are in the process of discussing those. We'll certainly be coming forward as well with legislation that relates as a response to those reports from those commissioners.

I know that every member of this House wants to have an opportunity to provide their input. Every member of this House will have an opportunity to do that. We believe that it's important that we get on with that work. Particularly with regard to the motion before us, it's important that we allow the opportunity for sufficient debate to take place.

We know that there are municipal elections coming up next year, and this restructuring initiative should be in place in time for those municipal elections. Hopefully, the House will be able to deal with this matter with some diligence and pass the appropriate legislation so that the municipalities will have sufficient time to prepare for that and to deal with those issues.

Today in the House the Minister of Finance gave a report on the status of our economy in Ontario. It's all good news; good news from the standpoint of what it means to men, women, young people and children in the province of Ontario. The growth of jobs, the performance of the economy is second to none. We have never had a better time of productivity in Ontario than we have had over the last five years.

We want to give credit to the Minister of Finance for successive budgets that he brought forward that were difficult budgets. I know that the reaction today from opposition parties was not positive. Frankly, their role is to provide critique, and their role is to point out, perhaps, where we could have done better. Unfortunately, all too often it is criticism without any positive recommendations. What they cannot argue with—and even the leader of the third party in the House this afternoon made

reference to the fact—is that productivity in the car manufacturing sector has outstripped that of the Michigan plants, which are the leaders worldwide in automobile manufacturing.

1900

We at least want to recognize that the leader of the third party knows that the initiatives that have been taken by our government in the economy to create jobs—which, by the way, were created as a result of the tax cut policy of our government, the stimulation that meant to the economy—are good for the people of this province. In his own way, although it was with a great deal of hesitation, I think there was a direct compliment there to our Minister of Finance, to the economic policies of our government over the last few years.

I'm waiting, frankly, for the Leader of the Opposition one of these days to actually take his place in this House and admit that the tax cut policies of our government were the right thing to do. Slowly but surely his federal cousins in Ottawa are coming to that recognition. The Minister of Finance for the federal government in this country is beginning to see that he should be delivering tax cuts to the people of this country. Individual members of the federal caucus are pressuring the finance minister in Ottawa to give tax concessions and tax cuts to the taxpayers of this country. At one point, we even see the Prime Minister admitting that it may be time to provide some tax cuts to Canadians, who are still the most highly taxed taxpayers in the western world. That is shameful, particularly when we have the kind of surpluses that the federal budgets have seen and will continue to see. There shouldn't even be a debate about that.

I know that my colleagues opposite will come back to their mantra that had we not provided the tax cuts, we could have balanced the budget so much earlier. The truth of the matter is that that simply is not the case, because what would not have happened had we done that is the stimulation of the economy, the creation of the jobs, which in turn puts many more people to work who were otherwise reliant on the social services network in our province. The fact that we have close to 500,000 people now working who in 1995 were reliant on welfare surely should have the support of every member of this Legislature regardless of their partisan affiliation, because this is a celebration of the individual. This is a celebration of being able to give hope to people in this province.

I also want to point out to the House today that the initiative of our government to put constraints on spending in every ministry—even in the area of health and education, where we've actually increased spending—asking people to do things in a more efficient way, to actually target spending so that we know that we're spending our dollars in those areas where it is going to be needed and where, dollar for dollar, we are getting return on investment, that initiative allows our finance minister to speak today about the fact that we are very close to balancing the budget. I can tell you that, as he said, by the time his next budget comes forward, we will be

announcing to the people of this province that for the first time in many years we have a balanced budget in this province. That would not have happened had it not been for the economic strategy we launched in 1995. This is not by mistake. It would not have happened had we continued in the tax-and-spend policies of the Liberals and the NDP before us.

I had the privilege of being an observer this past weekend at the Liberal convention where the Leader of the Opposition was reaffirmed as the leader of the Liberal Party. We wish him well in that capacity. It carries with it a great deal of responsibility. We don't take lightly any role that any member in this House plays. Having said that, we don't wish him too well. We know that to play the role of opposition is important. After all, it's Her Majesty's loyal opposition. In that capacity, we look forward to Her Majesty's loyal opposition actually helping this place to develop productive policy that is in the best interests of the taxpayers of this province.

One of the things I heard Mr McGuinty say on the weekend was that he was going to launch a policy development process. In speaking with a number of the delegates to the convention, I found out, not surprisingly so, that to this point there really hasn't been a policy development process in the Liberal Party. That probably explains why over the last couple of elections the people have had a clear choice. That clear choice was a policy document, the Common Sense Revolution in 1995 and the Blueprint in this last election, that clearly stated where we as a party stand in terms of our commitment to fiscal responsibility; our commitment to ensuring that the social safety net of this province was strengthened and maintained; that we would ensure services such as health care and education would be approached both on a compassionate level and yet in a fiscally responsible way. That is because for the last number of years we have had a policy development process in place in this province that has drawn on men and women and young people from across this province and drawn them into a process that allows them to bring forward ideas. They were part and parcel of a very dynamic policy development process that resulted in those two election platforms.

When the Leader of the Opposition says, "It's time that, as Liberals, we develop a policy development process," I congratulate him. I do think it would be appropriate for him to do that. I think that may allow him to come into this place and, rather than reduce himself to a smear-campaign type of debate, actually bring forward positive suggestions to this House as to how we can improve legislation. We welcome that.

In fact, the Leader of the Opposition also said in his speech that in the Liberal Party there is no room for the politics of smear. That was refreshing. I'm sure it's refreshing to the rest of the people in my caucus, because since re-election in this place, the politics of smear has basically been the mantra of the Liberal Party, and the Leader of the Opposition has spent most of his time smearing people who sit on the front benches of this government, has had very little to say about policy, very

little to say about how we can improve the quality of life in this place, and has voted against every positive piece of legislation we brought into the House here. He hasn't stood for anything because he hasn't had a policy development process in place in his party which would have allowed him to stand for anything. What he has done, and very effectively, is oppose everything that we have brought forward.

1910

I know that perhaps, with now having been reorganized and settled into a little bit more comfortable position with members of his own caucus, who I know for—and maybe it's just hearsay, but there was a great deal of discontent or unrest—

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Hearsay.

Hon Mr Klees: Hearsay, the member says—about the degree of confidence that members opposite have in Mr McGuinty's leadership. That has all been changed now overnight at this conference in Ottawa. We're quite happy about that, actually; I know that perhaps Mr Cordiano isn't, and maybe one or two others. But you know, what we want to say as a party is that if there is any discontent in the Liberal benches, we welcome—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Klees: Yes, by all means. As long as you're able, as long as you're willing to commit to the values of our party, as long as you're willing to embrace the principles of the Common Sense Revolution and the Blueprint, if you want to consider crossing the floor, you're welcome to do that. I'm sure we can probably find a place to put a couple more seats here. It would help me as well when we have those votes; there's nothing wrong with having one or two more members on our side.

In seriousness, I'm going to wrap up my comments by saying that I'm proud of the policies that we as a government have brought forward over the last number of years. The record speaks for itself. The financial statement given today by Minister Eves is clear evidence of the fact that these policies with a focus on fiscal responsibility work for people in this province. I look forward to hearing from other members who will be sharing this time with me. I really believe that—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Klees: No, I really think that the member for Simcoe North and Mr O'Toole, the member from Durham, as well as Mr Mazzilli will do well to explain to the people in this province why it's important for us to carry on the debate in this House on these very important issues.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening to take part in debate on the House calendar motion. I'm pleased to follow the chief government whip's comments. I too would like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for a successful weekend in Ottawa.

The House calendar motion will allow the House to continue to meet until Thursday, December 23, and at that time it will allow the Speaker and your branch to

adjourn the House until the spring of 2000. I know we've taken some criticism this past year as a government for a lack of sessional days, but it's incredible, when you compare the last three parliaments. I look at the 34th Parliament led by the Liberal government; it sat 297 sessional days. The 35th Parliament of the New Democratic Party sat 385 days. The 36th Parliament, which was Mike Harris's first government, sat 431 days.

As a new member of the assembly, I've been very impressed with the legislation that our ministers have brought forward since the throne speech on October 21. Our government has introduced legislation that keeps the promises that we made in seeking our second mandate. Just to update the members on some of the key legislation that the citizens of Ontario have seen since the House resumed on October 20th: Bill 7, or the balanced budget act—I know the official opposition supported it and I thank them for that; Bill 8, or the Safe Streets Act, which is still under debate; Bill 14, or the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act; and Bill 22, or the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act.

All of the legislation, including the debate on the throne speech, emphasized the fact that we as a government intend to keep the promises we made in Blueprint, our election platform. We promised the citizens of this great province a safer Ontario while at the same time building an economy that will provide the government with the necessary resources to support the health and education programs that our citizens expect and deserve.

In 1995, our government told the people of Ontario that we would cut taxes to stimulate the economy, create investment and create jobs for the people of our province. When the Mike Harris government came to power in 1995, my colleagues had to deal with a great and serious financial situation. Between 1985 and 1995, the Liberal and the NDP governments raised taxes 65 times with their spend-and-tax fiscal policies. In fact, their careless mismanagement of the taxpayers' money didn't just stop there. Over a million people were on welfare. From January 1990 to September 1995, Ontario lost nearly 50,000 jobs while in the rest of Canada—and they might have been bad days in the rest of Canada as well—they gained over 350,000 jobs. The provincial debt was growing without restraint. The bottom line was that those governments were clearly not up to the job. Why? Because the Liberal and NDP governments were not creating an economic environment that was desperately required to assist the process of job creation.

In 1995, Mike Harris went before the people of this province with a solution—the Common Sense Revolution solution—which was supported by 129 of the 130 PC candidates versus only four Liberals: tax cuts through a Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge. In fact, Lyn McLeod, who was the leader at the time of the survey, did not sign this pledge, nor did the official opposition's current leader, Mr. McGuinty. When Mr. McGuinty supported tax cuts during the 1999 election, the irony wasn't lost on the Kenora Daily Miner and News Online when they wrote: "Cynics say Liberal leader Dalton

McGuinty is only backing the legislation now because of political expediency—he sees it as a vote getter. They'd be right again. The Liberals didn't endorse similar legislation in 1995 and skirted the issue in the spring campaign."

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't see him addressing the motion, which is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): That is not a point of order. Continue.

Mr Dunlop: Since mid-1995, Ontario's job growth has consistently outperformed that of the rest of the country. Most importantly, the increase has been in the private sector. The jobs have been full-time, and Ontarians of all ages have benefited from the growth.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to share with the House how tax cuts have helped the economy and therefore helped promote job creation. Ontario's economy is growing faster than the rest of Canada or any of the G7 industrial nations. Ontario's economy is expected to grow by 5% in 1999, above the 3.7% forecast in May's budget. We're very happy about that. Ontario has gained 615,000 net new jobs since September 1995 and the job growth in 1999 is expected to reach 3.1%. In 1999 so far, retail sales are up 7.3%, housing starts are up 24.3% and exports are up 16.2%.

1920

Let's look at what tax cuts have done to help benefit Ontario business investment. Ontario business investment last year increased to \$38.5 billion. As investment grows in Ontario, so does the ability for firms to increase capacity and boost production. As a result, the following takes place: AstraZeneca is building a manufacturing facility, a \$250-million investment; Owens Corning has announced they will spend \$40 million to upgrade their manufacturing facilities; Lucent Technologies also announced an investment in their facilities of \$50 million. In 1997, Toyota decided to expand their Cambridge plant by \$600 million. It should therefore not come as a surprise to the leader of the third party that Ontario has moved ahead of Michigan in car manufacturing.

It makes it all rather clear that through tax cuts and through greater investment in the province, the following increases in employment would occur. In September of this year, 28,000 jobs were created. That is nothing compared to the 43,600 jobs created in the month of October alone. Since 1995, Ontario has created 615,000 jobs, almost half the new jobs in Canada. Job growth is estimated to be 3.1% in 1999. We are well on our way to meeting our goal of creating 725,000 jobs by the end of next year.

Ontario has taken a leadership position in the fight for job creation, and others would agree. For example, the National Post states: "(Reducing) taxation is a very important part of a productivity agenda because it rewards success. When the people of Canada get more back from what they earn, that will in itself be an incentive, to continue to work hard and be rewarded for that."

Allan Rock, a Liberal MP and Minister of Health, states: "I think it has been clear for some time that the tax burden on Canadians is very heavy.... We have said from the outset that one of our goals is to reduce the tax burden."

I think we should spend more time emphasizing what I believe is a lack of leadership on the part of our federal government in Ottawa. As our Minister of Finance stated earlier today: "In an open, global economy, jobs and investment find new homes quickly and easily. High taxes scare away new investment and jobs. They raise the costs of producing goods and services."

The province of Ontario and most of the other provinces have been steadily reducing taxes, but Canadians still face a higher personal income tax than any other nation in the G7. The provinces cannot make Canada competitive on their own. Over 60% of the personal income tax burden is imposed by the federal government. The federal government has to strengthen the national economy by cutting taxes. All of the provincial finance ministers agree that federal tax cuts and immediate, full restoration of Canada health and social transfers should be priorities of the federal government. They have also called for a reduction in job-killing federal employment insurance premiums.

In spite of the fear stories that we hear from our opposition, it is interesting to note that Ottawa has slashed over \$6.2 billion from the Canada health and social transfer levels of 1994 and has restored only \$2 billion to date. Our government not only has absorbed these cuts but in 1999 will spend over \$20.6 billion on health care, the highest total in the history of our province.

I mentioned earlier the grave situation Premier Harris found the books in when he came to power in June 1995: \$11.3 billion was the deficit. The Premier, in the Common Sense Revolution, laid out a five-year plan to eliminate that deficit, and he sold that plan to the citizens of this province. That's why he was elected with a majority government in 1995. I was so pleased to hear the finance minister announce this afternoon that we are exactly on target to reduce the deficit, as planned on a five-year plan, which will be eliminated next year, in the year 2000-01.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight on this House calendar motion this evening.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to rise and speak on the House calendar motion. I can't say that I've ever spoken on a calendar, but this is an important calendar. It's the calendar that drives the government agenda. The government agenda is one of growth.

As I look across, all of the complaints, all of the doom and gloom of the last 15 years we continue to hear, are because they oppose this House calendar motion, because it is a motion of growth, and it is in the best interests of Ontarians for us to hold further debate on key legislation before the House rises for the winter break. The

opposition opposes that. They do not want to hear the debate on that legislation.

This government was elected based on the Blueprint for a better Ontario, and we are proceeding with this mandate. In order to do that, we certainly need the House calendar motion to continue with that.

It's important to go back to the previous governments as they accuse our government of not sitting enough. In the 36th Parliament, we sat for 431 days and yet only passed 114 pieces of legislation. That legislation was important legislation, again legislation of growth and prosperity. It's interesting, if you go back two governments, the NDP and Liberals, one sat for 385 days, less than our government, yet they rammed through 163 pieces of legislation that ran our economy into the ground. By running our economy into the ground, not only were people laid off and there were no jobs, but our health care system essentially was not helping anybody, our education system was not properly funded, community safety—police officers certainly with no training. With a growing economy, we've corrected some of those problems.

We need to go back, in order to appreciate what we're trying to do with this motion, at least to 1990 and see the deficit that was accumulated by the Liberals and David Peterson, who, by the way, was from London. We were assured that we had a balanced budget, yet in the end we found out there was over \$2 billion in deficit; then with an NDP government, almost \$12 billion in deficit. Again, health care deteriorated; no money for hospitals, no money for our education system, no money for community safety.

Because of those essentially mortgaging our future, we were not able to perform all the things we wanted to. If you take a look, a \$12-billion deficit represents a third of the provincial budget. Those two governments in one year overspent one third of the entire provincial budget. How responsible is that? In my riding of London-Fanshawe, I believe the median household income is \$40,000, maybe a little bit more. For a household to spend, say, \$12,000 to \$15,000 more than their income every year—how long is that sustainable? Not very long. As I went to the doors, that's what I heard from these people who had median household incomes of \$42,000. They were saying: "Can we spend \$15,000 more than we make? Yes, maybe for one year, two years, but at some point we have to pay it back." The opposition just doesn't understand that.

1930

The debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs. I'll tell you why. If you look at all the places in the world, all the different provinces, the ones with lower taxes have the highest growth. However, in this province the opposition still doesn't get it. It's interesting, as we all canvassed through the election and prior to the election, we heard in every household that they were overtaxed. The families in my riding, again, with the median household income of \$40,000 said, "The \$1,000 extra in our pockets we could spend on our children, we could spend on preparing for their education, we could spend on paying

down some family debt." But all we hear from across the floor is that they could spend it better than the families in my riding that make \$40,000 a year. We disagree with their thinking. We want people to have that money because it's their money. The Liberals think it belongs to them and not to the taxpayers.

That's why this House calendar motion that I'm speaking on is important. In order to really comprehend where we're going, we need to understand what happened in 1995 with the record deficit of \$12 billion. We hear accusations from across the floor that we somehow added \$20 billion to the debt. Let me assure you that in order to cut one third of the provincial budget, essentially we'd have to cut everything. We would have to eliminate health care. That's what they're talking about: eliminating health care, eliminating education, eliminating community safety. Mike Harris was not prepared to eliminate any of those things. He was prepared to grow our economy. In order to grow our economy, we had to cut taxes. The Liberals want to add this to the debt. Let me tell you, the federal Liberals not only did not cut taxes and they increased taxes for Ontarians, but they added \$250 billion to the debt.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): What your Mr Mulroney left—

Mr Mazzilli: Now the argument from the member for Kingston and the Islands changes, because he doesn't like the fact that the federal Liberals added almost half of the nation's debt in a mere four years—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): And kept the GST.

Mr Mazzilli: —and kept the GST. That's the kind of commitment we get from Liberals. Not only do they not decrease taxes, not only do they not eliminate the GST, but they add half the nation's debt in a short four or five years—unacceptable.

That's why Mike Harris decided, through consultation with members of the public—because prior to being elected, the one thing I will say about our Premier is that he did not make policy on his own. He consulted with the grass roots. In every corner of the province where he went, he heard that taxes were too high. Whether he went to Sudbury, to Kingston and the Islands or to London, he heard that taxes were too high. It's logical that once you speak to citizens, once you speak to business owners and once you speak to workers who no longer have a job—the common denominator was that taxes were too high, from all the groups. Obviously he didn't go looking for a Harvard professor or anything like that; he took his advice from the grass roots. The grass roots told him taxes were too high, so he cut taxes by 30% of the provincial portion of income tax. That is very significant. While he was doing that, the federal government not only increased taxes but also the Canada pension and so on. They continued down their path to destruction.

By reducing those taxes, what essentially happened was a job growth unprecedented in this province. Today, as we heard the finance minister say, there are 650,000 net new full-time jobs in the province—pretty in-

credible—at a rate of growth in Ontario in excess of 5%. Those households in my riding that make the \$42,000 a year are now able to keep 30% more of the provincial portion that we promised during the last mandate, and we're going to add another 20% income tax cut from this time. So you can see in a short period of time where the provincial portion of income taxes would be cut by 50%.

What other government in this province or in this country has ever thought of doing anything like that? It has not been the Liberals. Not only has it not been the Liberals—they are quite clever, I will say, because they know the tax cuts work. The public in my riding make a \$42,000 median household income—some more, some less—yet the Liberals think that somehow they can take their money. But they continue to talk about tax cuts. Interesting; it must be popular. It must be that people really want tax cuts, or businesses want tax cuts. They don't want to listen, but they continue talking about it. Just in case it might be popular and they might have to do it, they want to make it sound like it was their idea.

Let me tell you, Jean Chrétien not only opposed tax cuts a number of years ago, downright opposed them—and it's funny, because Dalton McGuinty continues to oppose them. Dalton McGuinty continues to oppose tax cuts, and not only Dalton but the entire caucus. Every day when we came into this House, after canvassing for more than 30 days through the summer, we were told, "We want taxes to come down; we want spending on health and education," and here we are almost into December, and the opposition is still opposing tax cuts.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the member is either totally mistaken or he's got his facts wrong, but he can't say what he just said. He said that Mr McGuinty is against tax cuts. There is no such thing. It just isn't true.

The Acting Speaker: That is no point of order.

Mr Mazzilli: Sometimes the truth hurts. You cannot come into the House every day, oppose every tax cut this government has come up with and then somehow stand for tax cuts. It doesn't work.

It's interesting, because through the election—

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

Interjections.

1940

The Acting Speaker: The member does not have a point of order.

Mr Mazzilli: The guy who was talking to the honourable member from across must be the same homeless person that the Prime Minister was speaking to.

Taxes have come down in Ontario. They have come down by 30% in the first four years.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Davenport will please take his seat.

Point of order, member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, we didn't come here to hear personal attacks on other members. I would personally ask that he withdraw that comment immediately.

The Acting Speaker: There was nothing offensive in what the member said.

Member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Mazzilli: I'm very happy on your ruling that we are here having a debate on a time motion that is very important—

Interjection: Calendar.

Mr Mazzilli: Calendar. I'm not normally accustomed to speaking to a calendar, as I said before, but this is an important calendar. It's a calendar that will put forward a government agenda of growth. As we heard the finance minister say today, 650,000 net new jobs, a growth of over 5%. Not only in my riding but as you look through statistics, there are families in this province making less than \$40,000 median household income. When you have these families in certain ridings making a median household income of less than \$40,000 and you have the Liberals of the day wanting to tax them some more, it shocks me. Who do they represent?

With the economic statement that we heard today from the finance minister, I'm convinced that for the people I represent in London-Fanshawe, because of the growth—do you know that the General Motors plant in London cannot keep up? We are having such a difficult time in filling the jobs at that plant, machinists and so on, again because of a strong economy. It's because of plants like General Motors, 3M, the Robert Gordon Co, some of the small enterprises in my riding, it's because of those things that we're able to sustain health care, health care not only in the province but in my riding.

I'd like to share my time with the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's the efficient use of time really that this particular bill is about. It's the House calendar motion, which is all about time. Clearly I will exhaust this portion but, with your permission, I would like to speak a little bit longer in the next portion, if that's permissible. Otherwise, I'll relinquish my time now.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to clarify if I'm allowed to speak. If you could check with the table, am I allowed to speak after our time of four minutes has been exhausted?

The Acting Speaker: No, you're not. Once you speak for the next four minutes or so, that's it.

Mr Mazzilli: I was under the impression that I was able to share my time. If not, I will continue with the debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member is allowed to share his time, but if he's not choosing at this time to share his time with the member for Durham, he can finish and then the member for Durham can speak later.

Mr Mazzilli: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I apologize for the error in procedure.

Back to the calendar motion, there are many pieces of legislation that we as a government felt were important. It's not us who felt those things were important; it's the people of Ontario.

One piece of legislation, named after Sergeant Rick McDonald, has to do with police pursuits. This is an area where the federal Liberals have really dropped the ball, when it comes to a motor vehicle used in a criminal act. When a motor vehicle is used in a criminal act, it certainly falls under the Criminal Code. What we find is that the federal Liberals just have not taken any leadership as far as sentencing and penalties. In light of them not doing anything, we will.

We're proposing an act that's tough on people who flee from police, with increased penalties and increased suspensions. In the area where one flees and causes serious bodily harm or death, we're proposing a suspension of 10 years or a life suspension. It's this type of legislation that we heard about from the grassroots. They wanted us to go in this direction. But in order to do that, we also need to complement our police services. That's why we have put through our last mandate of hiring 1,000 new police officers in the province of Ontario. Let me give you a comparison to that.

The federal Liberals spent almost \$200 million registering shotguns in this province. They're registering shotguns. Gun control has existed in this province since the 1930s. The Liberals certainly didn't come up with it. Handguns in the province of Ontario have always been registered. What do the federal Liberals do? "Well, let's register the farmer's shotgun. That's going to prevent crime." They certainly don't understand crime: \$200 million on registering shotguns.

Assuming governments had no end to their resource base, possibly that would be a good idea. But in the real world, people need to prioritize things. So do we register shotguns or long rifles that are owned by hunters and farmers? In some cases these are people who need these as tools of their trade—some farmer in the middle of nowhere. Essentially the federal Liberals are saying, "We'll spend \$200 million registering your shotgun." You know what the equivalent of that is? Two thousand new police officers in Canada.

It's interesting. They talk about the chiefs. The chiefs are not accountable to taxpayers. It's government that needs to prioritize things.

Interjections.

Mr Mazzilli: No. I've talked to the chiefs about it. They don't have to justify spending in any way. It is governments that have to take control.

So the question becomes, for \$200 million, do we register long rifles or do we hire police officers? The federal Liberals took the easy way out. They're going to register long rifles.

I know our government would have hired another 2,000 police officers, because if you want to target crime, you have to target the criminals. That's what we understand, and we will be doing that. We will be targeting criminals.

What I hear from across the floor from the Liberals is that they came up with all kinds of education campaigns. They were going to educate everybody. But you know what? As that happened, crime still went up. You know

why it went up? It was a good education initiative, but the people they were educating weren't committing crimes. Can you imagine? How could one ever prevent crime if you weren't targeting the criminals? Our children weren't committing crime. We can certainly say that they were receiving an education under the Liberals on crime, but they were not the ones. We will target criminals in our government.

1950

Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to join this debate. I always find it very interesting that the only thing the members on the other side can talk about is to attack the members in the opposition or to attack the federal government. What I would like to talk about is how their policies in effect have attacked the more vulnerable people in our society.

But before doing that, let's just return to the calendar motion, which is really what this is all about. I think the people of Ontario ought to understand that a legislative calendar is put together every year by the Clerk's office, in accordance with the rules, which basically allows the Legislature to sit for about 13 to 14 weeks in the spring and early summer and for 13 or 14 weeks in the fall. You could say that means that by this time, taking the election out of it, we should have sat for at least 20 to 25 weeks this year. Of course, you and I know, Mr Speaker, that we sat for exactly seven days in April and May of this year, and since that time we have sat—I believe this is our fourth week.

So I say to the government, if you had all of this legislation that you wanted to pass, why didn't you call the Legislature back after the election in June of this year? Why didn't you call us back in September? Why didn't you call us back in early October? Why didn't we sit for at least another seven or eight weeks in the spring?

We will come back every day of the year to discuss the issues that are important to the people of Ontario, provided that each and every day we have a question period. Question period is the only time when the opposition gets the opportunity to hold the government of the day accountable for its actions. It's the time in our democratic system when we can ask questions of the government ministers, in the hope that they will give us an answer to some of the questions.

Of course, for anybody who has seen the question period routine here over the last four to five years, there are a lot of good questions being asked but there are almost no answers given by the government of the day.

The other amazing thing that's happened, and which shows you the total anti-democratic mood of this government, is the fact that we are now in evening sessions. Evening sessions are regarded as another sessional day. The average person might think, "What difference does it make?" The difference that it makes is that a sessional day should have a question period attached to it. By us sitting every night, in effect the government gets two sessional days but we only get one question period. That is important if we want the democratic process, the parliamentary process that has been around in the

Commonwealth countries for at least the last six or seven centuries, to operate effectively. You have systematically attacked the democratic process that has taken place in this province over the last 150 years by the draconian rule changes that have been introduced just within the last two to three years.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, I'm prepared to go on but there seem to be a number of other discussions.

The Acting Speaker: Order. If the member for Davenport wants to have a conversation with the Minister of Transportation, they should go outside the House. We're trying to hear from the member for Kingston and the Islands on this important piece of business.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

So let's get it straight. We will sit every day of the year, if you want us to, as long as you give us a question period every sessional day, which means a question period in the afternoon and a question period in the evening, because we want to hold you accountable for some of the dreadful actions that you've taken.

I see the Minister of Transportation with a very big smile on his face. I would hope that he has read the recommendations that are contained in the Provincial Auditor's report, in which the Provincial Auditor clearly states that all the outsourcing that was supposed to save all of us, the taxpayers of Ontario, a lot of money—because we were going to lay off our own MTO employees and they were going to all outsource—is in fact costing us more money. That is a stunning indictment.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): No, it's not.

Mr Gerretsen: I will tell you something, sir. If I have to take the difference between your word or the Provincial Auditor's word, I will take the Provincial Auditor's word every day of the year, because this man knows what he's talking about. He has investigated your department and he's come to that conclusion, that in effect it is costing the taxpayers of this province money with all the outsourcing.

Hon Mr Turnbull: A lot of poppycock.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, yes, we'll see about that. We will see about that.

And that is only one area. We could have been discussing, if we had met earlier this year, the problems that have occurred within the MTO. We could have been discussing the problems that have occurred in our health care system. Surely there is nobody in the Legislature who can possibly take comfort in the fact that someone who is diagnosed with cancer and who needs radiation treatment—when radiologists have said, "You've got to have the treatment within four weeks after it's been diagnosed"—that only 32% of the people, fewer than one in three, get the treatment within that period of time. We can have all sorts of answers from the Minister of Health that evade the question completely, but no one here can take any comfort in that. The Minister of Health; the government and the cabinet should be working on those problems to make sure that the people of Ontario get the

health care not only that they've become accustomed to but that we all deserve.

It's very interesting. Earlier today, there was a very interesting article in both the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail that dealt with the auto industry. The reason I'm bringing this up again is that we've listened tonight to members talk about how everything is rosy in Ontario. Yes, for a lot of people things are a lot better, and thank goodness jobs have been created. Nobody is going to deny that fact. We want to see people working. People want to work themselves so that it will give them a sense of self-esteem, a sense of self-worth.

Particularly in the auto industry, it's very encouraging to see that we're actually making and producing more autos now than in Michigan and that many of these are exported. Absolutely, that's a wonderful thing. If we could do it with twice the number, so much the better. But what was very interesting is that one of the chief economists, if I can find that article—I think it was a Mr DesRosiers and a Mr Gomes of the Bank of Nova Scotia; they were their automobile specialists—came to the conclusion that one of the reasons cars are being produced in a more cost-efficient manner here in Ontario has a lot to do with health care costs.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Good show.

Mr Gerretsen: I see the minister clapping. Our health care costs are, on the average, \$1,200 cheaper than they are in the States according to this economist. That's why our cars—and of course all of those extra costs are part—

Hon Mr Turnbull: No thanks to the federal government.

Mr Gerretsen: Just a minute now. You can have your say, sir, when you fix the problems within the MTO. But if the health care system is the underpinning of a lot of the things that are happening that are good in industry, why is this government trying to dismantle the publicly accessed health care system that we have here in this province? You're doing that on a day-to-day basis.

Look at your health care restructuring costs. You have allocated something like \$2.1 billion for the building of new hospitals across the province. The Provincial Auditor says you're \$1.8 billion short. You're short that money. That money has to come from somewhere. It has to come from the taxpayers of Ontario. That shows you that the whole health restructuring process was greatly deficient, because that money has to come from somewhere.

2000

Let's talk about some of the other issues. Let's talk about our credit rating in this province. We used to blame Bob Rae when our credit rating went down from an AAA to an AA- credit rating. Do you want to know something? During your tenure over the last five years you have not been able to raise that credit rating by even one point. It's still at exactly the same level, and do you know why? We know why. Because you have allowed the debt of this province to increase from \$88 billion, according to your own financial statement today, to something like

\$120 billion—more than a \$30-billion increase in five years.

As I've stated many times before, the interest cost on that public debt is just increasing all the time. This year it's going to be \$300 million more than last year. It's going to amount to \$9.3 billion, more than the \$7.9 billion that the province pays for all the social services in this province, and that's hard to believe.

The other issue we could have talked about is the doctor shortage issue. I have a file here filled with letters from people, organizations, talking about the fact that people in different communities in our province—and I include Lansdowne, I include many of the rural communities and I include my own community of Kingston—cannot find a family physician. Their own family physician has retired or has gone down south to the United States, and families are literally waiting for two to three years to get a family physician.

What does the minister say about this on an ongoing basis? "Well, it's a distribution problem." Everybody who's knowledgeable in the health care system says that it's more than just a distribution problem; it's a supply problem. That may have started many years ago when I believe under the Rae government the decision was made to in effect lower the number of medical students who would be admitted on a year-to-year basis. I guess we're now reaping the ill results of that, that we simply do not have enough doctors in our system to look after the day-to-day needs, the family medicine needs, of our population.

As my colleague from Davenport said in his private member's bill last Thursday—and everybody voted for his resolution—there are many foreign doctors in this province who are competent, who have our standards. If they don't have the standards of medical care that we expect from people in this province, they shouldn't be practising, but if they do, we should do whatever we can in order to get these people qualified as quickly as possible. They shouldn't have to wait, as one of these foreign doctors told me, a year in order to write this exam. We should go out of our way. Of course, the Minister of Health says: "It's not my problem. Talk to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, talk to the OMA."

I don't care whose problem it is. Work together with all these groups, and let's sort this out and let's get these people qualified as quickly as possible. Let's forget about who's to blame and what happened 10 years ago or 15 years ago. Quite frankly, the people of Ontario aren't interested in that. They want to have the problems that are out there right now in our system dealt with. That's what it's all about.

There's one other issue I very quickly want to mention before I turn it over to one of my colleagues here, and that is that in Kingston right now we have a major problem with the children's aid society and the parent aide program that has operated within the children's aid society for about the last 15 years. This has been a very successful program in which basically individuals act as aides to children who have been taken into care, not from

a formal, social work viewpoint, but to assist the various children who are in care in one way or another.

I have been inundated with letters from not only parent aides but also from individuals who were in care with the children's aid society, who had the benefit of a parent aide at some time in the past, and many other individuals who do not have a direct self-interest in this, who are saying it is crazy, that it doesn't make any sense to have this type of parent aide program cut off. The reason it's cut off, quite frankly, is because the children's aid societies haven't got enough money and they have to choose between various programs. So the board of directors is placed in a heck of a position whereby they have to choose one program over another. I say to the Minister of Community and Social Services, take a look at these programs. If they really make a lot of sense—and they do—and help a lot of people, then why don't we support them financially?

Let me just very quickly read from one letter. It says:

"My mother, a widowed, single parent raising three children on her own, managed both lifestyles somehow."—to be both a parent and a parent aide—"Being a nurturing mother to all of us, and being there for our ups and downs, she also made herself available to the number of families she cared for outside our home. I don't believe any of the families I worked with in child care were offered their social worker's home number for assistance at any hour of the day or night such as my mother has for years. Many times she was called from our home in the middle of the night due to a family 'situation,' and provided care any time of day, any day of the year, at no extra charge to your organization, no time and a half, but just because she was needed. Even on Christmas Day, driving children from one parent to another because there was no transportation available, so the children would have time with both family members! Will the families of Kingston still have this kind of care with what you're proposing?" This is directed to the children's aid society. "I don't see how this and the megaservices the parent aides provide between them can be attained if the program is abolished."

That is just a sample of the many letters I have received on that. I say to the ministry, make sure these kinds of programs are funded. They are very minor investments. Please do not put the children's aid societies to the kinds of drastic choices they have to make. Those are the kinds of programs we should have been talking about and that we should make sure are in place.

I now turn the floor over to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr Patten: I must commend my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his astute observations, as usual.

For those who are checking in this evening as to what's going on in this House, they should know that by and large this is a waste of time. If you ever wanted to talk about a waste of time, this is it. There's a motion here that is required to extend the hours and the time beyond the calendar, which is of course set every year

and every year the government extends the hours, but it has to be debated. It's very difficult to spend too much time on the calendar when one speaks and one has an hour to address it, but that's what happens.

But it does raise a question which I think is important for people listening here tonight or watching the proceedings: Why is it that the government needs to go beyond its own time limit? There are two reasons, I would suggest. One is that it didn't get back to the House early enough. It could have convened the House in September, but no, it waited until the third week of October. Second, it is a weapon that the government uses to squeeze the opposition, to try to wear them down by adding late sessions at night. That's fine, because we won't be worn down. We're prepared to be here until Christmas Eve if it's required. But this is a technique that is used by the government in having changed the rules.

2010

I'll give you an illustration of this. I've experienced this numerous times myself and I've said it before. This Legislature, I'm sad to say, is the least democratic of all jurisdictions in Canada—I've researched this and I'm writing an article on this issue, and I'll be happy to share it with the members across the way and have them challenge what I'm saying—absolutely the most undemocratic Legislature in all jurisdictions in Canada. I'll give you an example.

This afternoon there was a bill in committee, euphemistically called the squeegee kid bill. Of course they talk about the road safety bill. They always have these interesting titles that tend to be the exact opposite of what the intention of the bill is. For those people watching, if you want to know something about how this government operates, it changed the rules of this House drastically, so this afternoon, after having heard 13 witnesses, they gave each party 10 minutes—the government party itself, of course, but the government is introducing the bill—gave the NDP and the Liberal Party 10 minutes each immediately following the testimony to input their amendments. If you ever wanted to see a sham, an abuse, an absolute abuse—that shows no respect for the people who are witnesses. As a member, I must say that in 99% of the cases people give considered thought and usually come in with some very good suggestions as to how a particular bill can be ameliorated. I have great respect for that, and I find it frankly an embarrassment sometimes to see the process aborted at certain stages because of what's called time allocation and closure.

Now, with any bill the government wants to put through, you'll see this accompanying motion to limit debate, and I call it that: to limit debate. Why should they be afraid to hear from people? Because they want to ram things through. It's unfortunate. Ten minutes: Can you imagine what an embarrassment that is? So what do the opposition parties do? It's a joke, an absolute joke. Amendments have to be in legal terms in order to address the legislation etc. But no, at a certain point the vote must take place. Of course the government has a majority on the committee, and because of that it votes in all its own

sections of the bill and then sends it back to the House, and as a majority government they can pass it.

But what does that do? It makes this place a mockery and it provides for cynicism on all sides of the House. Even some of the backbenchers are cynical about the process. Some of them even come to us because we're critics of various ministries, and they ask, "What's going on here?" We focus on a particular ministry, as we share it with other members of our caucus, and we get to analyze what's going on, we get to see what's happening, we see who they're speaking with etc. We do an analysis, and we're usually fairly good at predicting the sorts of things that might occur.

I want to point out that that's what this is all about: the ability of the government to have two days in one. I think there was a commercial on Certs or something at one time—two mints in one, or whatever it was. Well, two days is only three hours for each portion: three hours in the afternoon, three hours in the evening. They call them days. They want to accumulate all these particular days because it will look good at the end of the year, when they may be vulnerable for having rammed through things, to say: "Oh, look at this. We sat so many days."

They count on the public being ignorant about the rules of procedures, and generally they're probably right. Many people don't understand how this place works. They'd better start taking a second look at it, because they're getting inferior legislation because of it. I don't care of what stripe the members are. Every single member ran, put their name on the line, and was voted in to represent a certain number of people from Ontario. Once that happens, this place is to respect each member's opportunity to share the views of those people from that part of Ontario.

The most discouraging experience of my political life is the nature of the rule changes that have taken place by virtue of this government. I'm ashamed to say it when I meet other representatives from other parts of Canada. It is an embarrassment, a total embarrassment.

There's a bill coming forward to talk about restructuring in four different regions, actually affecting five different parts of Ontario. They will try to put all this in one bill. They'll laugh and say, "Boy, this will make it tough for the opposition." It sure will, because one may like a good chunk of it, which should be separated.

Historically, the bills for regional legislation have always been separate. Then you could look at Ottawa-Carleton on its own, for instance. I generally support the commissioner's recommendation. I have a few ideas for some amendments. That's fine. But say I don't agree with something somewhere else, or some of my colleagues don't agree with another part. They might not allow the members from Ottawa-Carleton to move ahead with something that's fine and deal with these things separately.

They're going to try to ram this through. I ask the people tonight, you watch this closely. They'll try to ram this stuff through very quickly. And you know what? They've created the kinds of rules that enable them to do

so. But will it serve Ontarians well? We shall see, because in many instances what happened was—how many times did the tax bills have to return? Nine times, in some instances, and they still don't have it right, because they wanted to move it through extremely quickly.

On that, I will share my time with the member from Davenport, who would also like to make some comments.

Mr Ruprecht: I appreciate the discussion and the comments that were made by our member from Ottawa Centre because he is always very illustrated and makes some very good points.

But there's one thing we want to make sure today that we all understand. That is, I've recently found out that the Conservatives, within the party—this discussion took place within the party and within caucus, and it was a very pointed discussion. Do you know what it was? I want the people of Ontario to know. The discussion was: "How do we get this economy going and in what way do we start cutting? Do we start cutting the deficit, the debt or the taxes?" In other words, "Do we pay off the debt or the deficit, or do we give a tax break to those who are in the highest bracket of taxpaying citizens?" That discussion went on for a long time because they didn't know which was the best way to go. Finally, they came to a conclusion and said, "What we're going to do—"

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure the honourable member would want to withdraw his comments. I can tell you that what he is saying is absolutely untrue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): That is not a point of order, chief government whip.

Mr Ruprecht: This is really interesting. Let me ask this question. The honourable member might just have to look over here on this side. Do you mean to tell me that the Conservative government and the members sitting here did not have a discussion on how best to start the Ontario economy, which was down? Is that what you're intending to tell me tonight? Of course that's not true. You did have such a discussion, and I'll tell you some more details—

Hon Mr Klees: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order? Under what standing order?

Hon Mr Klees: I would ask for unanimous consent to be able to reply to the member's question.

The Acting Speaker: I heard some noes.

Mr Ruprecht: I can't believe what I just heard. I mean, this is incredible. Here is a member of the Conservative Party actually standing up and saying he didn't have a discussion about how to best start the Ontario economy, which was down. Can you imagine? That's just incredible. All he has to do is look over here and he'll even see some of the ministers laughing.

We all know that you had this discussion. In fact, do you want to know something interesting? We had this discussion. We had to discuss how best to pay off the debt, which is outrageous. Let me tell you something

else. I'm just wondering how many Ontarians would know today what our debt really is. Do you know what our debt is? Over \$100 billion. That's outrageous, and you should have started to pay that debt off. You didn't. You made a decision. You had a choice, and what did you choose? You chose to pay off your friends. That's what you did. You paid off your friends. And you know something? You're still paying them off today. I want Ontario to know that you're still paying off your friends today.

2020

Oh, yes, I see what you're waving around there. At any time, I would be ready to compare the blue book to the red book. I'm prepared at any time to have that discussion in this House.

I think it's outright outrageous that this government has not seen fit to start paying off our debt, which is in the neighbourhood of over \$100 billion. Do you want to know what's outrageous? That's outrageous, and I'll tell you what's more outrageous: The budget of the Ministry of Citizenship could be paid off every year, because in terms of interest alone, we are paying more than \$10 billion on this debt on a yearly basis. Do you want to know how to save money? Do you want to know how to start the Ontario economy? Pay off this debt. That's what you should do.

You had a choice. You have a choice even to this minute. You could stand up today, as minister—and there are a number of ministers here today, which I'm delighted to see. One of them, of course, said that we never had this discussion, that we never discussed how to fix the Ontario economy. I find that simply funny and I find it almost—I won't say the word "deceitful." No, I won't say that, but I find that very strange.

Let's make it clear. Our debt right now is over \$100 billion, and our deficit is right here. The deficit is clear. Do you know what the deficit is? It's \$2.6 billion. That's the deficit.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Ruprecht: At the same time, I remind you that you chose to go with a tax break, this tax break that you've introduced and that you are continuing to use. You are now going to say to Ontario people, "The tax break is going to save you more money." You're going to say that the tax break is going to save more jobs. That is your mantra.

Today there was another press release that has just come out. Would you believe this? Another press release, repeated ad nauseam on the other side. Do you know what this press release says? Tax cuts and more jobs. We know—we have figures; we have the facts—that this did not create more jobs for the Ontario economy. We know what creates jobs for the Ontario economy. First of all, it's the tide that raises all the ships, and it comes from the south. That's what raised the Ontario economy. Our auto sector, that's what raised the Ontario economy, and our ability to compete, but certainly it was not your tax

break. I stand here fully knowing that it was not the case. The fact is not that the tax break creates jobs; what creates jobs is our economic proficiency.

I am delighted to be able to give you just one example. If you want to take the red book and compare it to the blue book—you made certain promises. One of the important promises this government made was to say to us, "If you have a degree from another country"—

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: In fact, you said it. You made the promise here in 1996. She made the promise. Do you want me to quote back to you what you said? You've got the guts right now to sign your Christmas cards. I know what you're doing, you're signing the cards.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I know it's late, but if you could address your comments through the Speaker, it would be very beneficial.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, I apologize. What I meant to say simply is that the member is looking down and signing something. I'm not sure exactly what she is signing, but she's signing.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask that you request the honourable member to please withdraw those comments.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, I had withdrawn that comment.

The Acting Speaker: I don't know which comments you wish withdrawn, but I think—

Interjection: The last 20 minutes. It's all hogwash.

Ms Mushinski: All of them would be greatly appreciated.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I can't hear the member, chief government whip.

Ms Mushinski: Apparently I have had some difficulty hearing his words, because I think he was mumbling them, so if he did withdraw them, I apologize. But I would appreciate his being on record as withdrawing all of his comments.

Mr Ruprecht: I withdrew that.

The Acting Speaker: Fine.

Mr Ruprecht: But you know, Mr Speaker, I resent that this member said "hogwash." It's quite clear what he says over here. I'm supposed to sign some Christmas cards too, but I'm not going to do that right now, because I'm going to wait for a while.

The Acting Speaker: Through the Speaker, please.

Mr Ruprecht: Yes, Mr Speaker. Sorry about that.

Any time I hear government members yelling and screaming like they are today, there's only one reason for it, and that is because they are upset. They are upset because we're saying something that is absolutely true, and that is, you had a choice to make and you made the wrong choice. In fact, on this side we're convinced you're continuing to make the wrong choice, because you're not paying off our debt, which is in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion. You are not doing that, and I know that some of you on the government side know that's a mistake and you should have done it already,

because it's costing us over 10 billion bucks just in interest payments. That's one of the reasons our rating has not gone up.

The members for Kingston and the Islands and Ottawa Centre indicated it before, but I think it's worthwhile to ensure that the point comes across loud and clear, that here we have a government that says, "We know how to fix the economy and we are good managers of Ontario's money." If you are good managers of Ontario's money, then how come both our members said earlier that the financial rating has not gone up over five years. Do you know why it hasn't gone up? It's not because we're saying it hasn't gone up. No. It's because the financial sector, Moody's, New York, Chicago, all those financial markets are saying to us that you haven't fixed the economy. The reason you haven't fixed it is easy to understand. What we see in Ontario is clearly an artificial movement of our economy. It's an artificial movement.

Let me simply say this specifically in response to your comment. We would give you credit if that rating were to go up again, AAA+. But is that going to happen in the near future? It can never happen, and do you know why it cannot happen? It's simple. Because the tax breaks are not creating the jobs. The tax breaks are not paying off the debt. The only way the rating is going to go up is if we fix the debt.

Here you're telling me today in this wonderful press release and in this wonderful book, and more paper and more paper, that the deficit now is \$2.6 billion. You haven't even kept your promise that you were going to reduce the deficit in four years. That was the promise you made. Five years are up. You've been in office for five years and it's still \$2.6 billion. Have you fixed that? No. You're saying you'll fix it in another year. Let's take another year.

Let me ask you members a question before you get even more excited, and that is, when are you going to start paying off our debt? We have a plan. Our plan is clear. Our plan has been proceeding quite well, but you haven't done that. You haven't paid one cent on the debt. Have you paid one cent on the debt? Have you done that? No. But our leader, Dalton McGuinty, was clear about what he was going to do. The Liberals were clear about what they were going to do: 50-50 was our decision; 50-50 was our promise. But you said you're going to fix it. We're saying today, what is the answer to the debt? You can laugh and you can scream and you can be upset all you want, but give me an answer, please. When are you going to start paying off the debt? I still haven't found the answer to that.

2030

Interjection: We've already started.

Mr Ruprecht: Where is it?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Read the statement.

Mr Ruprecht: Right, read the statement. I've got the statement right here, and it's still right now \$2.6 billion. That's the truth. When you finally start paying off the

debt, we can afford as Ontarians to do something about the homeless crisis.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Have you done something about it? You have to make a fundamental decision. You are, today, at the crossroads of another decision to make, and that is, are you going to take this seriously or are you going to take people more seriously? That's what you have to do. You have to make a decision. It's an easy decision for us to make. We put people first.

By putting people first, we have a decision to make too, and we made the decision and you have voted for it. But the minister gets up, and what does she say? She leaves the backbenchers out to dry for voting for my resolution on Thursday. Then the two speakers who spoke against it finally got up and decided to walk out before the vote took place and leave all of you people to vote for the resolution. I've never seen that before.

Talking about an autocratic government, the member for Ottawa Centre said it very clearly. He said, "This is the most autocratic government in the history of Ontario."

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: There they go again, because I know there's another nerve we've hit. I have never seen this in the history of the province of Ontario. The minister sends two speakers out to speak against the resolution on access to trades and professions by foreign-trained professionals. Then the two speakers that she told to speak against it get up and walk out, and the rest of the Conservative Party votes in favour of this resolution.

Talk about games, I've never seen a game like this, and you, Minister, are partly responsible for this game plan. You're playing games with the people of Ontario—that's what you're doing—and we're not letting you get away with it. I'm speaking here tonight and I'm telling you that the people know what games you're playing in this House. Not only are you cutting off debate, but you're also playing games, and we're going to tell the people of Ontario. These games may be OK for one day, these games may be OK for two days, but in the end, the day of reckoning is coming to you as well, and that is when the question is going to be asked: Did the Conservatives start paying off that debt which is going to take us, down the road, not to economic eureka but to economic destruction? That's precisely the major point that I want to get across today.

You are not doing something for the people, because if you were, you would do something about access to trades and professions. The reason we brought out a policy—you always say, "These guys don't have any policies." Our policy is clear.

We would have been much ahead in terms of the crisis with the doctors in Ontario, the crisis with veterinarians, because you don't have enough veterinarians in Ontario. They're not there. You have many problems: the crisis of homelessness, the crisis of tenants. You have lots of things to fix, but you're not really fixing them. Your ideology has to be changed. There has to be a paradigm

shift taking place, and that shift has to be more towards people and less towards tax credits. There simply has to be a shift of paradigms.

We're saying this today to the people of Ontario: I am proud that you supported the resolution to have foreign-trained professionals enter the professions as soon as possible, maintaining the high standards. I am proud you did that, and I will not forget that. I want to give you full credit for that. But now we've got to take the next step.

Mr Mazzilli: Pay off the debt.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Of course we have to pay off the debt. I'm happy that the member from Scarborough is finally looking up again and she's discussing things, as she has in the past, and we've got this great relationship going, but I want to tell you something. She had promised us in 1996 that we would have an credential assessment service. The credential assessment service is still not in existence today, and she said that. After that, we had another minister saying—

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent of the House that we send a letter to the federal government that all of us demand the \$4.2 billion in transfer payments for health and social services that we're owed. We'd like to make something productive out of tonight, so let's have unanimous consent that we ask for the \$4.2 billion to be returned—

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would request unanimous consent so that the member for Stoney Creek can advise us as to what his position is with respect to the Hamilton-Wentworth restructuring.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No. The member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: Here we are, another classic example—

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, I wish you would create some order here, because this shouting and screaming is not getting us anywhere. It's very simple. When the Conservatives do not have an answer, what do they do? They blame the federal government. They've got to blame somebody.

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: I'll tell you something. Why don't you look at something on your desk right now? What's on your desk right now is a decision that you've got to make, and you're not making the right decision. You keep making the decision that the tax cut is going to create a wonderful Ontario. I am telling you, there is so much hate out there against this government. There is so much pain and suffering out there.

Let's just think about what you've created here. You've created hundreds of demonstrations. You've created people going out with signs on the street because you're not listening to the people. You are not listening. You haven't listened to the people of Ontario. You're

forcing them out. They can't get your ear. When they call the Office of the Premier, they get an answering service.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: No, when they call—let me tell you what is very interesting. What we want you to do is to start listening. We want you to be kinder and gentler, that's true. As Dalton McGuinty said—and after talking tonight I agree with him. I was thinking at one time that maybe, just maybe, there can be a kinder and gentler Mike Harris. But I know now. As our leader Dalton McGuinty said earlier, can there be a kinder and gentler chainsaw? No. Chainsaw Mike is continuing to wreak havoc in the city of Toronto and other places.

Look at what happened in terms of the education institutions in Toronto and our schools. Look at that. Because of the funding formula the Conservatives have created in Toronto, you are directly responsible for shutting down schools. You know that. You're shutting down schools. The Toronto school board made a decision not too long ago to close 10 schools. You know what? In December—in other words, within 14 days—the Toronto school board has to make another decision. Do you know what the decision is going to be? Which 10 schools? There will be more. Last year 10, this year 10 and next year 10. On what basis? On the basis of a funding formula which has been unfair and unjust, because what it did not take into account is that our schools are more than simply educational institutions; they are the heart of our community. Our schools are the heart of our community, and you are starting to cut. You're cutting the heart of our community. That's what you are doing. You are cutting the heart of our community.

2040

Do you think there is just one Conservative who will say, "Maybe we should have thought about this in terms of the funding formula"? Maybe there would be some Toronto PC members who would have had a second thought: "Maybe we should change the funding formula, because the funding formula is cutting the heart of our institutions, cutting at the heart of the schools, cutting at the heart of the kids." Did you think about that? Some of you might have, but you were persuaded the wrong way. You had a choice. The choice was simple: Change the formula or close the schools. That was the choice, and what did you decide? I don't know whether out of arrogance or whether out of misfortune or whether simply out of ignorance you made a choice not to change the funding formula. It was directly related to this formula that you forced the school board to close 10 schools last year, 10 schools this year, 10 schools next year.

I'm not sure where it's going to stop. We want you to stop. What would it take, for the hundreds of thousands of parents in Toronto and the hundreds of thousands of kids in the schools in Toronto, to make you listen? What would it take? You're forcing out the kids, forcing out the parents and teachers, forcing them out on to the streets with signs, saying: "Mike Harris, listen up. Mike Harris, please wait. Don't close our schools, because they're more than educational institutions."

There's music and there's a library. These schools have parks and recreation programs. These schools have other purposes as well. I am very disappointed at what's taking place.

I could of course go on and give you many examples, many more examples of the choices you have taken which were wrong, but because of the time, I'm now giving my colleague a chance to address the people of Ontario and the House.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to join the debate, albeit for a few minutes, on this calendar motion, which is practically an extension to keep on working. If the government wants to keep on working, it has to come to the House and ask for permission. But we are happy to discuss the issue, and of course here we are.

It's not the first time that the government has done this. Not only have they introduced the so-called calendar motion, but they have introduced a motion to curtail the debate in the House, which is curtailing the democratic process, and not only of the members elected. Every time the government does that, they curtail the rights of the people out there who elected all the members of this House to speak on their behalf. That is most unfortunate, that the government does not recognize this particular privilege we should allow the people on the outside.

But of course the government has their agenda, and that's fine. They won the election. They have the majority. But it's not fair that they try to shove down the people's throats their agenda, right or wrong.

We have seen it time and time again. Just recently, a couple of weeks ago, I believe, or last week, we discussed the so-called balanced budget legislation and referendum. Big deal. I mean, it's five years on the books since Mr Harris came into power that they said, "We are going to do that." Do you know what's so sad about it? That they did all the dirty work, all the cuts that are affecting the people now. It's affecting the people of Ontario. And do you know what is disturbing? The cuts they have made are cutting the heart of the poorest people in our society, and those members don't realize that. They do not realize that.

Back on January 14 of this year, the final report, the Anne Golden report, had 105 recommendations on how to deal with the homeless. What did this government do? Absolutely nothing, just passed the buck to the federal government: "Let the federal people do it." We are back in the same situation that two rights don't make a wrong.

Interjections.

Mrs Bountrogianni: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Mr Clark just asked me where my principles are. I have been pretty polite all evening. I think he should retract those comments. I have principles, sir.

Mr Clark: Speaker, the statement I made was a generic statement to the entire bunch. They refused to ask for \$4.2 billion back from the federal government, so I asked them, "Where are your principles?" They're asking—

The Acting Speaker: No, no, no. We're not going to do this. Either withdraw your comments—which I didn't

hear, so if you had something to withdraw, I didn't hear. I'm sorry, member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr Sergio: Mr Speaker, can we reset the clock so I can have the couple of minutes?

Let me continue what I was saying before. This government keeps on saying, "We are not the government; we are here to fix the government." Well, for heaven's sake, if they are here to fix the government, they are responsible to all the people who can't speak for themselves, who can't be in this House to voice their concerns day in and day out. They are supposed to be speaking for the seniors, who day in and day out have to decide if they're going to be spending money on co-op medicines, user fees. They've got to pay rent, they've got to buy food, or they've got to buy the extra medicine. It's this government that should be speaking on behalf of the 200,000 kids who are owed money, and this government is not doing their share. It is this particular government that is causing our students to hit the streets because they can't afford the tuition fees. Those are the things that the government should heed.

But above all, I have no idea how they cannot pay heed to the report issued last week by Mr Peters. That was a very damning report, and they think, "We're going to do more, more cuts." My goodness, they have been terrible administrators of the funds of the taxpayers of Ontario. What did they do with it? They are saying they are spending more money. Well, it's not showing. The health care system is in terrible shape. The education system is in terrible shape. So where is the money being spent? Where is it going?

I am glad there are a few members here, including one of the ministers. They had an opportunity. They missed a wonderful opportunity. They could have balanced the books two years ago, ahead of any other province in Canada, they could have left every hospital open and they could have left every school open if they hadn't proceeded with that silly promise of a tax cut.

Instead, what have we left? We have left the people of Ontario with an additional \$21.8 billion of debt. What this relates to is \$9.2 billion in interest payments to service their debt. I don't have to tell you, Mr Speaker, or tell Mr Harris or Mr Eves or the members of the government what we could do with \$9.2 billion a year. We could keep every hospital and every school open, build housing for the homeless, without any additional funds. But these people here, this Premier, this government, are so bent on keeping a promise to keep the people on Bay Street happy, the ones who are giving millions to their election coffers, that they forget about the rest of the people of Ontario. It is most unfortunate.

It is unfortunate that they are the government and they can proceed with this type of legislation, without taking into consideration how to take care of the less fortunate. Really, if they are not the government but the ones who came to fix the government, that's what they should be fixing. That's sad.

Mr Speaker, I have about four minutes. I appreciate the time you have allowed me, and I appreciate the

members of the House who have been so good in listening to my remarks.

2050

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It has been an interesting evening.

Just before I get into some of the remarks I wanted to make with regard to the calendar motion, which of course opens up a whole flood of things—in fact, as anybody watching can see, under this kind of motion pretty much anything is up for debate because you can tie anything to the fact that you're talking about the time we sit here. Therefore, anything we do here, or if it relates to anything we do here, is fair game.

Before I move into some of those things, I just want to respond to a couple of the comments that were made by previous speakers, and I want to begin with my colleague directly across from me, one of the new members, from London-Fanshawe. I want to say this much: I give him full marks for the fact that probably 90% of his speech was his words. Obviously he had notes—don't we all—but he was not reading verbatim word for word something that was spun out of the backroom, and I give him credit for that. It takes a little bit of courage on the back benches, because one little slip and you're in trouble with somebody. Been there, done that, and got the T-shirt. I understand. Of course, we do razz some of your other colleagues who don't feel quite as confident. I don't mean to put anyone down in terms of their speaking abilities, but I do think it says a lot about you in terms of the comfort level you have with how you feel and think about things, as much as I might disagree, and I respect you for that.

Having said that, in terms of content, when you went off on to this stuff about the gun control thing, I think you lost a whole lot of us, especially when you started talking about the fact that obviously anybody who disagrees with you—I'm paraphrasing—doesn't know anything about crime, doesn't know what they're talking about.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: That was certainly the impression you left. It's what you implied. When I pointed out to you that the OACP, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, has taken the position that the federal gun control legislation, which I take quite a bit of pride in, having worked with the then justice minister, Allan Rock, when I was the Solicitor General of Ontario in developing—and I stand behind it 100%. I'm glad they're doing it. I think you ought to maybe meet with Toronto chief designate, the former chief from your immediate area, Julian Fantino.

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Ontario chiefs of police—

The Acting Speaker: What's the point of order?

Mr Mazzilli: —have to decide on what he expects from the province and—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Look, I tried to be nice, but if you want to play that way, the fact of the matter is that on the issue of whether or not there ought to be the kind of registry that's in place, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and as far as I know the Canadian association, has said they think this is the right thing to do in terms of public safety. Believe me, if their position were the other way around, every one of these backbenchers would be echoing those comments, but in this case they can't. Most of them are wise enough to sort of stay away from where the chiefs are, but this honourable member waded right into it. I wrote down the quote, and I know my colleague from Hamilton Mountain jotted down the same one. He said, "Police chiefs are not accountable."

I want to tell you that in our police system, yes, they are. They are accountable to the police services board, which is appointed by the province and municipalities, and there is a direct accountability. I want to tell you that everything that happens on our streets at the end of the day is accountable by the police chief, and she or he is accountable to that police services board. So to suggest and leave the impression that the police chiefs somehow have done something irresponsible, because they aren't accountable, in my opinion, shows that you, sir, are the one who doesn't know what you are talking about. The reason the chiefs are onside with this policy is not because they're a bunch of left-wingers; it's because when they look at this from the issue of public safety, they realize that the legislation makes a lot of sense. I would strongly suggest to you that before you accuse others of not knowing what they're talking about, you do a little bit more research.

I also want to mention to you—and then I'll leave you alone—when you were talking about police, you know again it's this myth that the Tories are the ones who care about the police, who care about law and order, but again what's the reality? The reality is that there were more police officers on the streets of Ontario when we were in power than you have right now. That's the reality. So rather than just blabbing off a lot of platitudes, maybe what you ought to do is take a look at the facts, because being in here—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I'll get to you in a minute—versus just sort of talking on the doorsteps that you referenced, there's a big difference. Especially when you're going to use third parties like the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and refer to what happened in previous governments, I would urge the member to please be a little more careful in doing his research, because if you ever have a point that I agree with, it would hurt to see you lose it because of other things you've attached to it. Having said that, though, again I enjoyed listening to you, as much as I disagreed probably with about 80% of it.

The member from Dovercourt—God, I could do my whole hour on whatever that was, and I'm not really sure what that was. Again, I mentioned earlier and I wasn't going to because I had mentioned it in an earlier speech

this afternoon, but he's provoking me. First of all, he says that the most important thing in the world has to be paying off the debt, and then in the next sentence he talks about, "What are you going to do about the homeless?" At the end of the day, you can't do both of those things at the same time. You've got to pick your priority, which is the essence of Liberal schizophrenia. They want to do everything and say that they can do everything, but the reality is that you can't.

When he talks about the balanced budget, the fact they could have balanced it earlier, what that means is that in order to do it you'd really have to unravel at least part of the tax cut. But what did they do in the last election? After they cursed the tax cut, sounded a lot like New Democrats in condemning the tax cut because it benefited just a very few wealthy people at the expense of a lot of programs and benefits that affected the majority—we would roll that back; they aren't doing that.

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is really out to lunch because—

The Acting Speaker: Will you withdraw that.

Mr Ruprecht: —totally wrong because there is no—
Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Sorry. That is my mistake. I apologize. Davenport. Correct? It doesn't help your speech at all, but I want to make sure you get your title right. I do apologize, though. I didn't mean any slight by that. Besides, personally, I don't think you can hold a candle to the previous member from Dovercourt, but that's another matter.

Again we hear this whole diatribe about being opposed to the tax cuts, but when the crunch comes, when it's time to show the people how you're going to be different from this government, which is what elections are about, they weren't doing it, they weren't doing anything different. In fact, we've already seen that on the balanced budget legislation, the official opposition, so-called, in the province of Ontario rolled over and voted with the government.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not sure why some Liberals are applauding. This wasn't such a good thing for them. It's that kind of position that will keep you in, at most, second place forever. That's true.

2100

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I just mention, since when is the pot calling the kettle black?

The Acting Speaker: What is the point of order? There's no point of order. Maybe we could calm down just slightly and the member could address his comments through the Chair.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I think I'll move on. It's like clubbing baby seals.

I want to comment just a bit on the member from Oak Ridges. I believe one of the Liberals commented on it. The chief government whip was referring to the comments made by my leader, Howard Hampton, this afternoon, wherein he was pointing out about the production

of vehicles in Ontario overtaking that of Michigan, and of course I can appreciate the partisan applause at the time that was said and the fun we had. But I think you gave a misinterpretation of what my leader was pointing out, and if I might, what that was, was that since it's exports that are driving our economy and since we are enjoying so much productivity lift, if you will, within the auto industry, but that most of it is export, the argument the government makes that the economy is doing so well because you've cut taxes makes no sense at all since the demand is being generated in another nation, not just in another province but in another nation.

I agree with my leader—now don't stand up and do a point of order; wait until it's your turn; you had yours—that the point is that your tax cuts had absolutely nothing to do with that overall demand because it's coming from the States, and let me tell you that if the American economy goes in the ditch and we follow shortly after, believe me, you're going to be the first one to say: "Wait a minute, you know, this is not all our fault. A lot of it has to do with the fact that the American economy has gone in the ditch and the demand for our exports has dropped."

You can't have it both ways. At the end of the day, we still maintain that the tax cuts you've implemented have only benefited a very few people at the top and that everything else that's happening in Ontario, by and large, is a result of the booming American economy, which is bound to lift ours.

That's not just us talking. I would agree with the Liberal who made the point earlier, and we've made it often too, that this is really why there hasn't been the lift in the credit ratings of Ontario on the international markets. They recognize that implementing the tax cut before you balanced the budget was not the best fiscal policy you could follow. It might have been the best political one, but it wasn't the best fiscal policy.

I think it points to the absolute arrogance of government members who persist in saying: "The debate is over. Tax cuts work." The fact of the matter is that debate is far from over and your bond ratings are at exactly the same level now as they were when you took over from us—for that very reason.

Hon Mr Runciman: Stay tuned.

Mr Christopherson: "Stay tuned," says the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Yes, I guess we will, because you're in a bit of a race here. I understand that if you can cross that line and balance the budget and start to show some money going to pay off the debt, then since the bond markets don't really concern themselves much about quality of life and standard of living—that's not their business; they're in the business of dollars—if you can get to that point before a dip in the economy, or God forbid, any kind of a burst of the bubble, then yes, you're right. Then I think your comment about staying tuned and your ability to be able to say something different about this down the road is there.

However, in that race, if the economy falls before you cross that threshold, believe me, this will be the least of

the criticisms you're going to have trouble defending against.

One of the other members—I didn't jot down which one; I believe it was one of the government members—earlier talked about provincial debt. I want to take a minute to put on the record that when they do that, they leave the impression that it's the Tories who magically know how to manage the economy and take care of things, and everybody else really just isn't, to use a phrase, up to the job. But the reality, if you will—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You liked that, did you? I sort of slid that in there.

The reality is that when Mulroney came into power in 1984, the accumulated debt was \$157 billion. When he left office in 1993, it was \$466 billion. It's hard to make the argument, as the government does, therefore, that Tories automatically know how to manage the economy better.

Hon Mr Runciman: Come on.

Mr Christopherson: What do you mean, "Come on"? Do you mean cut him some slack for the time he was governing in? Is that what you mean by "Come on," Bob? Cut him a little slack for governing in the deepest recession since the 1930s? Because if that's the case, you're right; I should cut him a little slack and be fair.

Hon Mr Runciman: We're not federal Tories.

Mr Christopherson: My point is not that it's exactly apples to apples. What I'm talking about is a bit of the Tory arrogance that we feel when you talk about economics, really in an almost condescending fashion. I'm pointing out the record of former Conservatives, and earlier I talked about what happened in Manitoba. I can go there again, if we need to. That's just a few weeks old. My point is that being a Tory doesn't automatically equate with being a good fiscal manager; it really doesn't.

Hon Mr Runciman: A Mike Harris Tory does.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, I see. Now we're going to be that specific. Actually, if you cared that much about the debt, you wouldn't have given the tax cut, because you would balance the budget and be eating away at the debt even sooner. So you really stand on your own argument when you do that.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You talk about job creation, but we've been there earlier today too. The fact of the matter is that your argument that revenues are up because of all the stimulation doesn't wash, because page 55, the first line of the taxation revenue in your document released today, shows that from the actual in 1998-99 of \$17.19 billion, your projected revenue is going to be \$1.1 billion less, Minister. You can't go on now to say, "Our cuts stimulated so much job growth that we're actually getting more money in revenue than we did before," because you're not. We are now realizing the full impact of your tax cut and we're seeing who it benefits. It's that very small portion who are extremely wealthy in our province, and we're now receiving less money in personal income

tax than we did the year before. That's why you can't balance the budget sooner and that's why you can't get at your stated priority, which is to lower the debt.

Again, an earlier member talked about growing the economy. What a lot of us are concerned about is the growing gap, that gap between those who have and those who don't. That applies in each of our communities, it applies in the province, it applies in Canada, and quite frankly it's happening globally. If I can just bring forward one piece of this—this, by the way, was published a year ago, and there's an update due very soon from the Centre for Social Justice, the folks who publish this, which had enormous coverage in the media and had a significant impact on a lot of professional policy people.

I want to bring to the attention of members of the House that in the summary one of the first things they point out in terms of the growing gap is that the top 10 CEOs in Canada each brought home more than \$10 million. That's an income of more than \$10 million. On average, the top 100 CEOs saw a 56% increase in compensation in 1997. It is mind-boggling that 100 of the top-earning individuals in this country to start with saw an increase in their compensation, 1997 over 1996, of 56%.

2110

I want to point out one case that they mention here. Robert Gratton is with Power Financial Corp, a company I think the Liberals would know very well. This one individual was paid \$1.758 million, and with stock options of \$23.5 million, in 1997 his take-home pay was \$27.4 million. One person, one year. Based on average incomes, it would take 47 years for the average person to make that much money.

I want to mention two things about this. The first one is, can you imagine how happy Mr Gratton was the day this government implemented their 30% tax cut in terms of what that meant to him in real dollars? An incredible amount of money, yet this government continues to play with numbers, talking about percentages and all the things you can do with stats if you want, when every middle-class working family across the province knows that that tax cut, if noticeable at all, was not worth the trade-off in what they see happening in their health care system, in the education system, municipal services, the fact there aren't as many police on the streets as there used to be, the fact that the police themselves are worried about privatization of policing. With all the things happening around us, if anybody even noticed their tax cut, they're feeling, "This is not a trade-off I win."

But I guarantee you Mr Gratton felt this was a great deal. If he wasn't happy or satisfied that the health care system could provide for his children or that the education system could provide for his kids in the way he wanted, I'm willing to bet real quick that he would make sure that those family members—because we all love our family and I certainly don't fault him for that. But the reality is, on the gift of the tax cut alone, he can probably pay for the finest privatized health care system anywhere in the world, and likewise send his kids to the best

private schools in the world. Why, other than whatever social conscience he may have—I don't know the individual so I'm not commenting on that—but to whatever degree he may have a social conscience and care about what's happening to everyone else, beyond that, why would he worry about what's happening in the public school system or happening in our public health care system? But, boy, every time the Minister of Finance talks about tax cuts, he's got his undivided attention.

The sad thing is that we're also seeing this on a global scale. I don't profess to be any kind of economist by any stretch, but I do wonder how much of the prolonged economic boom that we're all enjoying in terms of an economy that's roaring, even with the cuts that this government is implementing, is being borne on the backs of newly developing countries around the world, not even the traditional countries that have been exploited, quite frankly—let's be honest about it—by the West for at least three centuries now in a big way, since the industrialization of the West? By that, I'm talking mostly about the former communist bloc nations that are now rid of the tyranny of the communist system and have embarked on a course of trying to catch up with the West, if you will, in terms of the type of economic system, and a lot of them aren't doing so good. I really worry that history will show that one of the reasons we were in such a sustained economic boom was because there was sort of a shift in gears of traditional countries that the West is guilty of exploiting to a whole new group of countries. I don't know that for sure, but I worry that that is indeed the case.

The government loves to say over and over that they keep their promises, they keep their promises, they keep their promises, so at the risk of being repetitive myself, I want to again point out that the bill we just passed—it's 9:15 now, and we passed it at five to 6, so a little better than three hours ago—Bill 14, notwithstanding the LG's signature, is now the law of this province, and one of the things it does is go exactly against what you promised.

You promised in the Common Sense Revolution, and I'll read the quote directly: "The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt."

No, you didn't do it in actual terms. The \$3.1 billion you got from the sale of Highway 407 you put into the revenue of the budget year 1999-2000 so that your budget would look better than it actually was going into the last election. Now, in Bill 14, which is three hours old, you've brought in a change that allows asset sale money to go to—there are a number of places where it can go, but here's the one that's the real zinger—amounts allocated by cabinet "for projects that are designated as priority projects." Basically, they can put it in the government coffers and do whatever they want, which is exactly the opposite of what they said they'd do.

Let's understand, this government doesn't keep all its promises. This is a promise that you made, and you have now violated that promise both in deed and in legislation.

Why? Because a lot of your economics don't work out quite the way you say they will. You needed that \$3.1 billion. The problem is that \$3.1 billion isn't going to be there for next year. It won't be there for 2000-01. You're going to have to find that money somewhere else. You're either going to have to make deeper cuts—and we've already seen \$300 million in cuts, with another \$600 million, at least, to come—or you're going to have to increase revenue, but that's hard to do when you're giving another 20% tax cut to your wealthy friends, or you've got to sell even more resources to keep filling that \$3.1-billion revenue gap that you've got, which just happens to coincide with a lot of excitement within the government and a lot of attention to asset sales.

You want to talk about a fast way to break this province. It won't be in cash flow by doing that, but at the end of the day a lot of the foundations that were put in place, ironically, in large part by previous Tory governments for 40 years, will be eliminated, and without that foundation, all your talk about the fiscal foundations means nothing. Much of why this is a great place to live and do business in is because of the foundations that we have, and now it looks like you're about to sell them, breaking your promise in the process, in order to make your books look good, because you've now got this goofy balanced budget legislation, and like the Manitoba Tories you're going to have to do a dance at some point to cover off your revenue problem. So one of the things you're looking at is, sell more assets. Now you've changed the law, so every time you sell an asset, rather than what you said in 1995, that it would go against the debt, every dime will go into the general revenue fund and you can help to refill that \$3.1-billion gap.

2120

If we start to dip, if we fall in terms of the economy and we get anywhere near recessionary numbers—today the minister was talking 5% plus in terms of growth. I agree that's phenomenal, but I've been around the cabinet table when the news from both the private forecasters and your ministry forecasters is that you're going into negative numbers in the coming year and possibly for the next couple of years, because that's what's happening around the world, exacerbated in Canada by the high interest rates implemented by Mulroney. Let me tell you, you get into that world and you don't know what troubles are. You won't be able to sell assets fast enough.

They're banking that the race the minister and I talked about a few minutes ago is one that they will win. Well, as the minister said, stay tuned.

Let me take just a moment, because it's important to remember that one of the reasons we have the calendar motion before us right now is that the member from Stoney Creek's favourite piece of legislation will soon be coming. That is, of course, the amalgamation of a number of municipalities. I'm sure the government members know this, but originally the government's intent was to have the House rise as per the original calendar on December 9 and then if necessary to call us back in early January in order to finish the municipal legislation. That

plan changed—at least we became aware of the change—about two weeks ago, when the government was indicating, and a week ago confirmed at the House leaders' meeting, that indeed there would be a calendar motion extending the House not just one week but all the way to the 23rd, because no matter what, they wanted this thing law by the time they came out of this place, rising for the Christmas break.

Therefore, I think it's quite germane to talk a bit about the report as it relates to my community in Hamilton-Wentworth and, given that there aren't a lot of minutes left, I do just want to touch on a few things.

I had mentioned earlier today in my member's statement about the labour leaders threatening work action. Again, Speaker, you will know that I have raised the concern that in our special adviser David O'Brien's report—who, by the way, I thought did an excellent job. I met with him; he gave us a very detailed report. I think he's been as honest, as sincere and as professional as we could hope, but I really take exception to the things he's recommended as they relate to the people who work for the region and the municipalities that are involved.

The reason the labour leaders are upset is not because they disagree with one tier; in fact, most of them, by and large, certainly within Hamilton, have been in favour of the one tier. So it's not that they are looking for an excuse to oppose the whole action. What they are concerned about are some of these recommendations. I want to again point out that it was only in our recommendations that these recommendations were raised with regard to labour. They don't appear in any of the other special advisers' reports that I am aware of. I won't say that I've read every one of them front to back, but I'm not aware that these are in the other reports.

I say to anybody watching from those municipalities in Sudbury, Ottawa or Haldimand-Norfolk that if it happens to Hamilton, it's got to happen in yours, because so far the government's talking about an omnibus bill, which means all these bills will be bundled into one. I can't imagine how they would justify treating workers, from a legislative policy point of view, differently in Hamilton-Wentworth than they would in Sudbury or Ottawa or Haldimand-Norfolk. It would be very hard to justify that. So these concerns, if anybody watching cares about them, need to be removed from Hamilton-Wentworth, because if they aren't, it means everybody is going to have to wear it.

What are a number of these concerns?

First of all, it's recommended that there be a two-year moratorium on union certification. That just blew me right out of the water. To take away someone's rights—one of the fundamental rights that people have in a free society is access to free collective bargaining and the right to association and the right to join collectively. Those are fundamental rights in a free society. At least, so far in Ontario those are still fundamental rights. We're not so sure how they're going to hold up over the full tenure of Mike Harris's term as Premier, but for now, they are still rights. To suggest that they would be abrog-

ated in any way, shape or form because the government feels the need to do this restructuring would be such a miscarriage of justice, not to mention creating a climate within the workforce in all our municipalities that would make implementation of these changes very difficult, to say the least, and possibly non-workable.

Secondly, it's recommended that in order to deal with the differential in wages, because there are different collective agreements that apply to different municipalities, there would be something called "average leveling." As I understand it, what it means is average the wages of everybody in a given category, and wherever that wage averages, you would bring anyone below it to that amount, but anyone above it would be red-circled, meaning they're frozen. So even if there are COLA increases or other increases built into their collective agreement that they've negotiated, they wouldn't get them.

This creates a lot of problems, not the least of which is—and anybody who has ever sat at a bargaining table will know—that wages alone are not an accurate reflection of the remuneration that you receive, your total compensation package. For instance, if you've got a workforce that's getting a little older, then you might put a little more money into pension benefits rather than wages. If you have a younger workforce, it's not unusual that they would rather have the wages. Because of the upfront costs that young people face when they're starting a family and perhaps buying their first home, they'd rather have the wages. We all know that when you're in your early 20s retirement is never going to happen to any of us. None of us is ever going to get that old; that only happens to somebody else, so it's not unusual to see that sort of thing.

Also, you could see different negotiations putting money maybe into a dental plan, if there are a lot of people with young children and they want to make sure they're covered there. So the wages alone don't reflect anything. Not to mention, how can you expect any kind of esprit de corps at all among working people when two folks side by side doing exactly the same job and having exactly the same employer are making different money? Not to mention the fact—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): It happens here.

Mr Christopherson: My friend Bill Murdoch points out that it happens here. I would remind him how he feels about those cabinet ministers on certain days of the week.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Don't get him going, David.

Mr Christopherson: We don't have enough time to wind Bill up tonight, no. There's not enough time to wind him down after.

You can appreciate that that's not a good start for a brand new municipality, and all of this would happen arbitrarily and unilaterally. There is no suggestion here that maybe these are goals or suggestions or starting points for the parties to sit down and talk about. There is no recognition that the unions have a right to negotiate and speak on behalf of their members. This just totally removes that.

For somebody who wants to support this bill—I really do, because I've been so strong a believer in one tier—it's making it very difficult, if this is in the legislation, for me to vote. I realize that if they've got critical mass and they've reached the number they need in the government caucus, they don't care what we do on this side of the House. I understand that and I don't take it personally in any way, shape or form.

Mr Clark: I care.

Mr Christopherson: My colleague from Stoney Creek says he does, but I certainly don't. I want to vote for it because I do think it's the right thing and I think history will show that it's the right thing for my community, and I'd like to be voting in a positive fashion. But if you're going to have stuff like this in there, it makes it very difficult. So I hope there's a response from all the communities affected and enough pressure on the government that we see this dropped and there is none of this anti-worker, anti-union, anti-labour legislation contained within the bill when it's ultimately tabled.

I have barely a couple of minutes. Let me just mention a couple more things.

I was surprised at the size of the council. I think there ought to be an increase. I thought it was a little small for a population of almost half a million. I would hope there would be an increase and that there still can be a recognition that the suburban areas deserve to have better representation on the new council than is recommended

in here. I believe that because, again, I think everyone has to feel some ownership or being a part of the new city, and if there aren't enough reps there to do that, I think you're beat before you're finished.

An unpopular item with a lot of the public but one that I think needs to be addressed by us, outside the councillor world, or no one can really effectively, is that I think the mayor's pay is just fine but the councillors' pay is only about \$4,000 more than it is currently for Hamilton aldermen sitting on both city council and regional council. I know that sounds like a lot of money to people, but for the amount of work involved, for the responsibility that's involved, and in a desire to attract as good and the best kind of candidates we can, I think that's a little low.

Hon Mr Klees: Do you want the job?

Mr Christopherson: Not for councillor. I would hope the government would seriously look at that in a very non-partisan way and recognize that needs to be set at a level that is reflective of the responsibility and the work that's there. I don't think the report quite does that now. I would urge the government and the ministers involved to look at that, and with that, Speaker, I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That's actually not necessary. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2132.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 30 November 1999

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

House sittings, government notice of
motion number 10, *Mr Klees*

Mr Klees	957
Mr Dunlop	959
Mr Mazzilli	961
Mr Gerretsen	964
Mr Patten	966
Mr Ruprecht	967
Mr Sergio	971
Mr Christopherson	972
Debate adjourned	977



No. 21A

N° 21A

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 1 December 1999

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers



Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 1999

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CITY OF TORONTO

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): There is a movement taking shape to support Mayor Lastman's proposal to create a new province, the province of Toronto. The Toronto Star poll showed 54% of Torontonians as being in favour of this new province. Now there is an organized movement in place which has hired a constitutional lawyer, created a Web site and is raising funds.

Just why would people want to create a new province? Citizens found out that this government will cut another \$309 million, which will directly affect Toronto's poor. These cuts will directly affect student loans, legal aid, social housing, social assistance and child care. Toronto, in short, will be left holding the bag. In his lucid article, Michael Valpy from the Globe and Mail wrote:

"Minister Hodgson said the extra costs being off-loaded on Toronto and other municipalities—but mainly Toronto—will be offset by the savings in reduced welfare caseloads.

"This overlooks the fact that Toronto has been setting aside its savings for items like creating more child care spaces on its own—without provincial help."

We should not be surprised when residents of Toronto are simply fed up and wish to create the new province of Toronto.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): Professional firefighters play a critical role in the safety and well-being of our communities. We take for granted that when a fire occurs, they will be there. Every year, their heroic efforts in dealing with fire situations save countless lives, injuries and untold millions of dollars in property damage. In many cases they must put their own lives in jeopardy in order to serve our citizens. Unfortunately, over the years many have had to make the ultimate sacrifice.

It is important to note that the key role which professional firefighters play in our community does not stop at their actual response to fires. They are essential in educating the public on safety and fire prevention through

ongoing programs and community activities. Every year, their highly visible and selfless efforts on behalf of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada result in steady progress towards the treatment and eventual cure of this hideous disease.

I had the privilege of meeting this morning with Keith Hamilton and Fred LeBlanc of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association to discuss some of their concerns. Like any group within society, professional firefighters and governments do not always agree on every issue. Although we share many common goals and values in our efforts at working together in our communities, it is important to ensure that there is ongoing, open and frank dialogue at all times.

However, there is no disagreement as to the contribution these courageous men and women make to our society each and every day of the year. It is something for which we should all be very grateful and very proud. On behalf of my constituents in Scarborough Southwest, I want to thank them for their tireless efforts on our behalf.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I rise in the House today to make the Legislature aware that that the Oak Ridges moraine is being bulldozed as we speak. The government has to stop listening to developers and start listening to local residents and experts.

David Burnett, a planner from the region of Peel, says there are currently 53 development proposals for areas on the moraine which would result in a tripling of the population living on the moraine by the year 2021. He concludes that there is an "urgent need for provincial involvement in a long-term strategy for protection and management of the moraine."

1340

On Monday, when the bulldozers began razing the Jefferson Forest in Richmond Hill, the Richmond Hill Naturalists, led by Gloria Marsh, were there to try and stop the destruction of the moraine. Concerned citizens all over the moraine are asking the government to step in and protect wildlife and nature. This government refused to listen to its own ministry experts, to local residents, to environmentalists and planners who are telling this government that uncontrolled development is going to ruin the Oak Ridges moraine.

Listen to what the government's own report says:

"Urban expansion, with its associated extensions of sewer and water pipelines and development proposals in

sensitive areas, is posing significant threats to the long-term protection of the moraine's important water recharge functions. In particular, approved and proposed development in significant portions of the headwaters ... is creating a real possibility that the potential to maintain clean water will be permanently lost."

The government's own report is saying you're not going to be able to have clean water from Lake Simcoe to Lake Ontario. They're saying, do something. Don't just listen to developers. Protect the moraine.

CANADA HEALTH AND SOCIAL TRANSFER

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Listening to the Treasurer's Economic Outlook yesterday, I was pleased to hear that debt retirement, job creation and a soaring economy will continue for Ontario into the next millennium.

Like the Premier and the Minister of Health, I believe it is crucial—now more than ever—that the federal government resume its historical role in providing investments that are crucial to a better quality of life for all Ontarians.

I specifically refer to the federal government's responsibility to restore the health care funding that was taken away from the people of Ontario and to renew a fairer partnership with the province through the Canada health and social transfer program. The Liberal government in Ottawa has slashed \$6.2 billion from these provincial transfers, which puts undue pressure on our government, especially in light of the \$11-billion deficit we have almost eliminated while at the same time increasing overall spending on health care. Today, the federal contribution towards health in Ontario represents a paltry 11% of the total cost, and it's been estimated that the federal government will enjoy a \$100-billion surplus over the next five years, a surplus that is largely dependent upon Ontario's strong economic performance.

I call upon the Prime Minister of Canada, the federal government and every federal MP to restore the fiscal integrity of federalism, to give back the dollars they have taken away from Ontario's health system and to put in place a funding mechanism that will keep fair pace with the rising cost pressures of the health care system in this province. I would invite our Liberal MPP colleagues across the floor to support us in this endeavour.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Minister of Education, special education funding for the intensive support amount grants is inadequate to the point of being a crisis. Let me give you a real, human example of how your lack of resource support is hurting a child in my riding.

Madelaine is a grade 7 student. By the time she was in grade 1, Madelaine was identified as a special-needs child with serious learning and developmental limitations, including sight and hearing difficulties. For a num-

ber of years now, she has had great support and her progress has been moderate.

In the spring of this year the parents were told that the resources, a teaching assistant, available to Madelaine would be reduced due to the needs of others that also have to be serviced with the limited resources available to her school. Since the reduced assistance began in the spring, Madelaine has been left with little chance to succeed. As of her last progress report, Madelaine's progress has all but stopped.

Her parents have done their part to obtain additional support, such as the children's treatment centre for motor skills development and writing skills reinforcement. At home and school, Madelaine's parents have made themselves available to help whenever possible. Madelaine's mémé, who previously taught school, tutors her daily.

Madelaine's parents write: "We require a response and action before time leaves Madelaine stuck at the same level for months and months. Please help us find the resources to meet the special needs of Madelaine and others like her. She needs a full-time teaching assistant now!"

Minister, I join with Madelaine's parents and ask that the needs of these special children be met so they may reach their potential in life. Take responsibility.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I rise today as a proud Newfoundlander. I was born in Old Perlican, Trinity Bay, on the island and was brought to Happy Valley, Labrador, when I was six weeks old, where I grew up. My parents still live in Newfoundland and I visit them regularly.

Yesterday, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations saw fit to make fun of Newfoundlanders in answer to a question about bar hour extensions for the new millennium celebrations. He referred to Newfoundland keeping their bars open for 48 hours and added, quite unnecessarily, "What else do they have to do in Newfoundland?" The minister then hastily added that he apologized if he offended anybody.

Well, I say to the minister that I and thousands of other Newfoundlanders were and are offended. An apology in this House is not good enough. Having lived my life in Newfoundland, I can assure the minister that Newfoundlanders are some of the hardest-working in this country. They're also the most generous and give more per capita to charity than any other province in Canada.

Newfoundland is sick of being the brunt of mainland jokes. The minister can partially atone for his insult to Newfoundlanders tonight at the press gallery party. I am donating my beloved Labrador flag as an auction item, and I would suggest to Mr Runciman that he put the highest bid on this flag and proudly display it in his office. I would also ask that the minister apologize once again to the people of Newfoundland for his insult.

VICTIM ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): It's wonderful when a volunteer program helps the community. It's even more wonderful when that program continues to grow and thrive. I'm speaking of the victim assistance program of Grey-Owen Sound. This is a program to be proud of.

The victim assistance program started in 1992 with seed money from Bell Canada in the city of Owen Sound. In 1997, with funding provided by the Solicitor General's office, it was able to expand to service the whole of Grey county.

From only eight volunteers, it now has more than 45 dedicated volunteers, with 11 more sworn in just this week. Seven days a week, 24 hours a day, these volunteers are there to provide emotional support and practical assistance to victims of crime, tragic circumstance or disaster.

Now the program is expanding again, to high schools in the city of Owen Sound, with plans to go to other high schools in Grey county in the future. And it's expanding without requesting additional funding.

Now, for two and a half days a month, volunteers will provide the same support to students in the three city high schools. Working in conjunction with the staff and students of the school, the school board and the children's aid society, the victim assistance program will provide both education and support. The high school program starts today. While my duties here prevent me from attending their kickoff, I extend to them my heartfelt congratulations for yet another job well done.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Yesterday the Harris government in its economic statement bragged that the province's finances and economy have seen a tremendous improvement and that its active agenda of tax cuts and sound economic and fiscal management has put Ontario back on track. But I ask you today, when is the government going to put children as a priority back on track and back on its agenda?

This morning, Campaign 2000 released its Ontario report card on child poverty. The trends revealed in this report are extremely serious and point in a disturbing direction: a very widespread difference between the haves and the have-nots. The hard work and sacrifice of the past five years may be paying off, but the people of Ontario can now see clearly that they are paying off on the backs of the poor and of children.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance told us that, "Since mid-1995, Ontario's job growth has consistently outperformed that in the rest of the country."

Today, the Ontario Campaign 2000 Report Card on Child Poverty in Ontario tells us:

"Since 1995, the child poverty rate in Ontario increased 6.3%

"Between 1995 and 1997, the number of poor children increased by 32,000 ... In contrast, the number of poor

children in all of Canada decreased by 75,000 or 5.1%. More striking, since 1995 the number of poor children in the rest of Canada outside of Ontario decreased by 11.1%."

Mr Speaker, I don't think this is your view of Ontario, and it certainly isn't ours.

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today to comment on the active role that an organization in rural Ontario plays today.

The Ontario Women's Institute celebrated 100 years of service to the province of Ontario in 1997. Over the past few months, I have had the opportunity to attend four major anniversaries of women's institute organizations in my riding of Simcoe North.

As recently as Saturday, I visited the Clowes Women's Institute in the hamlet of Edgar, about 10 miles north of Barrie. We celebrated the 75th anniversary of that institute with a large group of members of other organizations in the area as well.

In rural Ontario, in the small villages, hamlets and townships, the women's institute organizations play a very important role. They do bake sales, fall fair displays and Christmas and special-event bazaars. They fund-raise for community projects. They work to help families in need.

In the county of Simcoe, the women's institutes were instrumental in building the Simcoe County Museum over 40 years ago. To this day, a member of the women's institute sits on the board of directors of the museum, along with other elected and appointed members.

Many members in this assembly, particularly those in urban ridings, may not be familiar with a local women's institute, but I can assure you that this organization is a vital part of the heritage of rural Ontario. As this organization enters existence in a third century this coming January 1, I commend them for their dedication and commitment to the citizens of rural Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE
AND SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant

à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please rise to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Tumbull, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Brenda	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	McGuinty, Dalton
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	McLeod, Lyn
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Parsons, Ernie
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Patten, Richard
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Pupatello, Sandra
Curling, Alvin	Lankin, Frances	Ruprecht, Tony
Di Cocco, Caroline	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Dombrowsky, Leona	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 32.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, November 18, 1999, the bill is ordered for third reading.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to pay tribute to the men and women of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association who are in the gallery today. These firefighters put their lives at risk every time they respond to calls, often not knowing what risks they will face, such as those firefighters who responded to the 1997 Hamilton Plastimet fire. These courageous women and men deserve our support.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

JUSTICE MINISTERS' MEETING

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Tomorrow the Attorney General of Correctional Services will represent Ontario at the annual federal-provincial-territorial meeting of justice ministers, and on behalf of the people of Ontario they will again demand that the federal government put an end to the discount sentences and quota system that are sending dangerous offenders back to the streets. They will also tell Ottawa the changes to the Young Offenders Act are long overdue.

They have my full support. People know where the government of Ontario stands. We stand on the side of victims, we stand for zero tolerance and we stand for a safer Ontario.

I've met with victims of crime, victims of criminals who were free on parole when they committed new crimes. They told me their stories, they told me what early parole has done to ruin their lives and they urged me to keep pressuring Ottawa for change.

The people of Ontario know that governments can make a difference. Many Ontarians have believed for years that the system was too soft on criminals. Five years ago, 59% of prisoners who wanted provincial parole were returned to our streets. That's astounding and it's unacceptable, so we changed the system. We appointed new members to the Ontario Board of Parole, people who understand that parole is a privilege not a right. Last year the Ontario parole board granted only 34% of parole requests; two thirds were turned down. We're making progress and we're making Ontario streets safer.

But the federal government is moving in the opposite direction. They started a quota system. They actually set a goal of taking half the convicts who are eligible to apply for parole out of the federal penitentiaries and putting them back in the streets. But it gets worse: The federal government has a statutory release program. With these discount sentences, prisoners are allowed on the street after they've served as little as two thirds of their time. It's written directly into the federal government's sentencing guidelines for federal judges: "It is an inmate's legal entitlement to be released into the community at two thirds of the sentence." Ottawa calls this "a right rather than a privilege."

They just don't get it. This is not time off for good behaviour. This is a special law aimed at convicts who do not qualify for parole, and convicts who had been sent back to prison after their parole was revoked. These offenders are being released into our communities without even so much as a parole board hearing. It's automatic, it's dangerous and it's wrong. Canadians deserve better.

On June 29 of this year, 15-year-old Jonathan Wamback took his dog for a walk in a Newmarket park. He

was chased by a group. When they found him, they kicked him in the head repeatedly with steel-toed boots. Jonathan has since emerged from a coma, but the damage is done. No longer fighting for his life, Jonathan now must fight to regain the use of his limbs. How can this happen in Canada? How can it happen in Ontario?

Just last month we were all shocked to hear that a Toronto high school student was brutally beaten to death. The thugs who killed Matti Baranovski are cowards. Reports say they hid behind ski masks, that they hid behind the anonymity of a group. And if they're under 18, they can hide behind the Young Offenders Act.

The people of Ontario are looking for justice. The Young Offenders Act denies this. But what is even more troubling is the message that the Young Offenders Act sends to our youth. In its current form, the Young Offenders Act offends everyone who believes, as I do, that society must pass on values like respect and responsibility to our young people.

The Young Offenders Act, the parole quota and discount sentences all violate a fundamental right of all Canadians: the right to feel safe in their communities; a right that we can no longer take for granted. Too many people are afraid to walk outside at night, but it does not have to be that way.

That's why our Attorney General and our Ministry of Correctional Services are going to send a message to the federal Attorney General that the people of Ontario are ready to take back our streets; that we view parole as a privilege, not a right; that we stand behind victims; that we believe our young people must learn to take responsibility for their actions; and that we demand a change from Ottawa.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): We heard some fine-sounding, nicely crafted words written for the Premier today, but I think we should take the opportunity to explore for just a moment the depth of the Premier's commitment to safer streets in Ontario and the very integrity of that commitment.

The Premier's first and greatest priority when it comes to crime in Ontario was, and remains, squeegee kids; those young people armed with hand-held pump-action squeegees who aggressively attack windshields in Ontario. By placing an emphasis on squeegee kids, this Premier is diverting our police from dealing with real issues of crime. He's diverting our police away from robberies, assaults, gang violence, murder and the like. I ask you, Premier, how does this make our streets safer when you divert police away from real crime?

Because you offer no supports to young people who have been reduced to squeegeeing for a living, you are about to drive them into theft, robberies, drug trafficking and prostitution. So again I ask you, Premier, how is it going to make Ontario streets safer when you drive young people from a matter of nuisance into real and serious crime?

Something else you might want to give some thought to is the fact that here in Ontario our probation caseloads are 70% higher than the national average. Our probation

workers simply do not have the resources and the tools they need to supervise probation. Again I ask you, Premier, how does it make Ontario streets safer when those people who have been assigned the very special responsibility to supervise criminals who are on probation simply cannot keep up with their caseloads?

Now we understand that with some of your upcoming cuts, you're going to be cutting rehabilitation programs in our jails. You're going to be cutting back on programs designed to curb criminal tendencies in criminals. You're going to cut back on programs that are designed to make those criminals safer for our streets when they are ultimately released. So I ask you, Premier, how is it making our streets safer when you cut back on programs that are specifically designed to curb criminal tendencies in our criminals?

Premier, we have put forward a number of positive proposals which you have yet to respond to, a number of concrete and very real ways in which you could do something about making Ontario streets safer for all Ontarians.

We've asked you to support tougher penalties for the customers of child prostitutes. We have introduced a bill in connection with that, introduced by Rick Bartolucci, a number of times now and you have failed to move forward on that.

We have also put forward the idea of creating safe school zones so that anybody found inside a school zone, within a number of blocks from a school, who had on their person any drug or weapon would result in automatic stiffer penalties. You have failed to move forward on that, Premier.

1410

We support greater funding for the Ontario Provincial Police Project P in the fight against child pornography. You have failed to move forward on that, Premier.

We support my colleague Richard Patten's amendments to the Mental Health Act, which we believe will go a long way towards making Ontario safer. We think as well that you should be making sure that nobody is released from any of our mental health institutions without ensuring that there is some place for them to go so that they remain under some kind of supervision.

Premier, we have put forward a number of positive policy proposals designed specifically to make Ontario's streets safer. We have not wasted time in puffery directed at the federal government. We put forward concrete proposals.

In addition, I might remind you that your Victims' Bill of Rights was long ago determined by an Ontario judge to be absolutely useless. It is of no real value whatsoever to victims in Ontario. A victim brought this matter before the courts seeking compensation. The judge said: "This is not a law. This is simply a policy statement." It is a slogan. It does nothing of any real value for people who are victims of crime in Ontario.

I remind you, Premier, if you have any real, genuine, pressing and earnest interest in making the streets of Ontario safer, then I suggest, on behalf of Ontarians who might be concerned about crime, that you stop diverting

attention to the federal government and that you begin for the very first time to assume your responsibility to make Ontario's streets safer today for Ontarians.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm actually pleased that the Premier had something to say on these issues today, because these are important issues. I want the Premier to know that I've spent a fair amount of time this fall out there talking with young people about what's going on in their schools, what's going on in their neighbourhoods, what's going on in their communities. They asked me to pass on some advice to you, Premier.

Unlike you—you seem to be focused on punishment; you seem to be focused on what happens after a crime is committed—they are asking why your government doesn't seem to care about the prevention of crime, why resources are being taken away from the prevention of crime. They want to know why they hardly ever see a police officer in their school any more, never mind their classroom. They wonder why they don't see police officers coming into the school and talking to them about how you avoid violence, about how you prevent violence.

I can tell them why we don't see police officers doing that. First of all, you've cut the number of police officers in the province. Even Statistics Canada acknowledges that. Secondly, you think it's more important for those police officers that we have to be out chasing squeegee kids rather than dealing with gang violence, rather than dealing with home invasion against seniors. You're going to focus on 200 or 300 squeegee kids in downtown Toronto. You seem to think that is the serious crime problem in Ontario.

I want to have on record exactly what has happened to policing in the province since the Premier came to power. In 1994, there were 20,737 police officers in the province. In 1998, the number had been cut to 20,454. The natural rate of retirement means that 6,000 more will leave in the next two years. This province, this government, has absolutely no strategy to replace those officers, never mind to provide more police officers to take into account the growth in population in the province.

I want to remind the Premier that when you go out and talk to young people, they want to have a working relationship. They don't like to see violence. They don't like to see youth gangs. But when you never see a police officer in your classroom or your school, when the very people in the schools, such as guidance counsellors, who used to be there to hopefully help deal with some of these situations aren't there either, it means that the resources aren't being put in place to deal with crime prevention. It means that your government really isn't serious about this.

I want to also point out that a number of those young people out there who you seem to want to go after—squeegee kids—are in fact simply taking you up on your advice, your government's direction. They are out there trying to make a living. Adult education has been cut. It's been dramatically cut and we read that it's going to be cut again. Young people who need skills, who need

training, who need education are finding that the opportunities aren't there to get that, so they try to find a job and they'll try to take any job.

It amazes me. When you walk down the street you'll see street vendors who will sell you a hot dog, you'll see street vendors who will sell you flowers, you'll see street vendors who'll sell you ice cream. Those are all services that are provided on the street. We don't try to criminalize them in our society. We try to regulate and control them, so that they're not in some way a threat to public safety, so that they're not a threat against people.

But your government seems now to want to criminalize young people. And at the same time that you're criminalizing them, the real crime problems that are out there, the real crime problems that can be prevented—youth gangs, home invasions of seniors—your government seems to have nothing to say about them, no strategy to deal with them and, what's more, the police officers aren't there to do that work.

Premier, you can't deal with crime prevention by means of press releases. What we've heard from your government is a series of announcements, a series of press releases, that amount to nothing. One day your Crime Control Commission is out there telling people that the Santa Claus Parade in Toronto is a major problem. The next day your Crime Control Commission is out there saying something else. The next day you're making another statement. But the reality is that your government is not doing a thing in terms of crime prevention. In fact, you're making the problems worse.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): In the public gallery west is Trevor Pettit, who is a former member for Hamilton Mountain in the 36th Parliament.

SPEAKER'S RULINGS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday afternoon my colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina raised a question in this House about the impact of Mr Stockwell's advocacy for the reduced size of Toronto city council. The member for Trinity-Spadina raised his concern about the possibility of reducing Toronto city council in the context of issues relating to homelessness, rent control, child care, public transportation and other issues.

When he addressed the question to the Minister of Labour, you redirected his question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, although the Minister of Labour was clearly acting in his capacity—I assume so, anyway—as minister responsible for the GTA. Although I understand that you simply misspoke when you suggested that the standing orders are clear with respect to how a question must be directed for response, I also wonder if you were relying on previous Speakers' rulings for guidance.

Herein lies my point of order, Mr Speaker. You, yourself, made an implicit ruling when on Thursday,

November 25, you allowed the member for Scarborough Centre to put a question to the Minister of Labour about Mayor Lastman's statement about Toronto forming its own province, and again on Monday you allowed the member for Scarborough Southwest to put a question about Mr Stockwell's advocacy for a reduced council size to the Minister of Labour.

Speaker, I hope you can help me and my caucus understand why two Tory questions in support of a reduction of Toronto city councillors may properly be directed to Mr Stockwell while our question in opposition to such a blatant curtailment of democratic rights is out of order.

While I recognize that the member for Scarborough Southwest tried to conceal the real intent of the question behind a pretext of caring about collective bargaining, his supplementary got to the real issues of concern to the Tories, which are tax reduction and service efficiency. Yet when my colleague asked an equally broad question, in which he highlighted some specific issues and then went on to raise, and I quote, "other issues," which of course would include the impact of collective bargaining in the city, you ruled that his question could not be answered by Mr Stockwell.

Mr Stockwell is the minister for the GTA. Two Tory backbenchers' questions were answered by the Minister of Labour. So today I simply seek your guidance in resolving this matter before question period begins so that we are clear on whether the minister responsible for the GTA will answer all questions related to the support of reducing the size of city council, which we know very well he would dearly love to do, or whether he is only responsible for answering such friendly questions when they are asked by a member from the government backbench. We seek your clarification on this, Mr Speaker.

1420

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Thank you very much. I don't believe there is a minister responsible for the GTA. There is not. As you know, and I'll refer you to page 122 of Beauchesne, it's very clear: "Ministers may be questioned only in relation to current portfolios." What I try to do in those questions is listen and see if there is anything relating to labour.

In the case of the question from the member for Scarborough Southwest, on page 888 of the Hansard of that day he specifically talked about "outside workers," and I'm quoting from Hansard now, "recently ratified a new collective agreement," and he phrased the question regarding the first agreement of the newly amalgamated city. That, in my estimation, related to a labour issue, which is the minister's responsibility.

I will say this: In the beginning I'm trying to listen very carefully to see exactly what the question is and there may be some occasions where I will miss something. But it is very clear you have to ask the minister a question that relates to his or her portfolio and I hope that is very clear.

The one from the member for Scarborough Centre: I was listening carefully. I may have missed it, but

certainly in her supplementary she phrased a labour question. In the first question I may have missed the reference to it—I don't have the Hansard in front of me—but what I will attempt to do is listen very carefully. I think all the members are very clear and I would ask all the members, if they are asking questions—obviously the government side would know—to make sure they go to the appropriate minister.

Hopefully we'll clarify the situation. When a question does come, I will attempt to listen as best I can to see if there's anything relating to any of the ministers so that they can answer the question. Of course, as you know, ministers can have the question go to another minister as well.

Hopefully that clarifies it. When the questions come I will try to listen very carefully. There will be some occasions, as in the case of the member for Scarborough Centre, where I may miss things, but I will try my utmost to listen very carefully to the questions.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to ask the House for unanimous consent to recognize World AIDS Day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Mr Smitherman: I rise to recognize the effect of AIDS on the world community. The nature of this disease I think is well known to all members of this House. It's a disease that robs people of their lives and it robs many of those in the prime of their life.

I speak from personal experience on this matter because I have lost too many friends to this insidious disease. I know too many people who today suffer from the effects of this disease that ravages them and I honour their lives by my speech today.

I remember the first time I heard the word "AIDS" and had a discussion about it with my friends. It was in the spring of 1983. So much has transpired since then, much that we have to be proud of as legislators, particularly in a country like Canada. But if anything, this disease has taught us about the kind of community response that is possible. It has taught us that even in the face of extraordinary crisis we can be hopeful.

Earlier today I had the honour to attend an event at Casey House, a hospice founded by June Callwood here in the city of Toronto that has provided extraordinary, dignified care to people suffering the final stages of this terrible disease.

A major corporate presence, Rogers Communications, one of the largest employers in the city of Toronto and in my riding, donated \$20,000 today to Casey House so that they could continue their work. This is just one example of the kind of community-based fundraising that has gone on related to this disease.

Every single week I attend events ranging from those that raise only a few dollars to those like the AIDS walk

in Toronto, on which I had the privilege of previously serving as chair, that raises almost \$1 million.

But the real community-based efforts that I want to speak to are those that come in small numbers, when people gather around and form care teams to provide dignified care for people who are living the final days of their lives, often at home. Community groups and community efforts have raised public awareness. They put pressure on governments and the private sector to fund proper health care, education and research.

Governments in the 1980s responded with public education programs, particularly the city of Toronto, which did such an effective job of working with the gay and lesbian community to address this problem. Research evolved. The government of the day in the 1990s introduced the Trillium drug plan and worked with the Minister of Health to try and address some of the problems in that plan. There continue to be problems, but that plan has allowed people some ability to get government support for the very, very expensive regimen of drugs that fighting this disease requires. With vigilance and determination, we make good efforts and we have some good news, but the challenges remain.

The bad news is that there are very vulnerable communities in our own cities, in our own municipalities, in our own ridings. Immigrants, IV drug users, young people who have heard less about AIDS and who think there are drug regimens that present a cure, often go about activities that endanger their lives. We need to continue our public education efforts, and given that AIDS is an infectious disease, we must commit ourselves to vigilantly fight against its spread.

In a world context AIDS is an even more horrific problem. While we are waging battle at home, the fewer resources that are available in other places have allowed for explosion of this disease. New cases are being diagnosed in Southeast Asia and the African subcontinent at an alarming rate. We have a chance in Toronto and Canada to play a role in addressing these problems as well.

In 2004 Toronto will host the World AIDS Symposium where so much information comes together and so much good can come, but we must pledge to be diligent in continuing the fight.

The evolution of the disease has also led to progress. Research in the medical community can mean that HIV diagnosis is no longer the death sentence it once was. Cocktails of a variety of drugs have meant major improvements for quality of life, longer and healthier lives for people. In some cases, people who had received what they thought was a death sentence, who were on disability, who were in places like Casey House, have been restored to the workforce because of the effect of these new drugs.

We have more to do. We must fight on towards an ultimate goal, and I believe I speak for all members of this House when I reaffirm the commitment of this place that we will continue to work until we find a cure for this terrible disease.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I rise today not out of great pleasure but out of the grim necessity that we need, on World AIDS Day in particular but at all times, to be addressing our role in response to this disease.

UNAIDS, the United Nations agency charged with combatting the spread of HIV, reported that there will be 5.6 million new infections this year worldwide, bringing the total to 33.6 million people infected. Every minute, and this just makes my stomach clench, five young people between the ages of 10 and 24 around the world are infected.

There are 54,000 Canadians infected with HIV, and in Ontario 16,000 people are diagnosed each year with HIV. While Canada and Ontario have been and remain in the lead in terms of research for a vaccine for HIV/AIDS, there are specific actions that governments must take to remove the barriers to people living with HIV/AIDS.

Effective on January 1, 1999, people using an Ontario drug benefit plan card and those who rely on the Trillium plan were faced with severe restrictions on their access to medication. Their doctors cannot exercise any judgment in recommendations for their drug therapy.

We've spoken to the doctors treating persons with HIV and AIDS. They're overwhelmed with the mountains of additional paperwork and bureaucracy this government has created. You require that they justify many medications and allow pharmacists to vet the diagnosis before releasing the medication.

1430

You keep saying that you're acting on evidence-based recommendations received from experts and this would be laughable if it were not so serious in its consequences. Real experts would never propose that prescription guidelines or evidence-based recommendations outweigh clinical judgments of a doctor who knows the patient's needs.

The fact is that when it comes to people living with HIV and AIDS, this government has a double standard. It is obsessed with reducing red tape for "real Ontarians," but when it comes to people with HIV and AIDS, they've created a mountain of new red tape. Last year, the government introduced a staggered, pro-rated deductible for the Trillium drug program, but unfortunately, you've not addressed the real issue yet again for patients with HIV and AIDS.

Over the years, we have raised here again and again the need for the elimination of the deductible for those people living with AIDS who continue to try to work, who are low-income earners or who are on long-term disability. Long-term disability plan recipients are considered earners, so they continue to pay the deductible for their drugs even if their income is at or below the level it would be if they were on social assistance or the Ontario disability support program. That makes no sense at all, and it is a crisis for the individuals affected.

I also want to talk for a moment about nutritional supplements and the restrictions the government has put in place. The ministry's refusal to fund nutritional supple-

ments unless they are the person's sole source of nutrition is simply not conducive to the health of persons living with HIV and AIDS. We've learned much about the role that this additional support plays in sustaining health and life, yet this government made a choice to enforce a policy that was not intended to apply to people who have a medical need for nutritional supplements. This is just plain stupid. Supplements are that, supplements, and it's no answer to say that people can buy them off the shelf. The costs are prohibitive for many of these people. When this government made their decision to stop funding nutritional supplements, they knew it would have a direct effect on HIV and AIDS patients, but they have refused to change this policy.

I want to now speak about the importance of honouring those people who have acquired HIV or who have full-blown AIDS. As an honorary patron of Voices of Positive Women, I think it's important for all of us to understand, to remember, to stress that this disease is a scourge on all of our communities. We can't turn a blind eye and say it only affects that group or those people. We know the numbers are appalling. We know that prevention is the most important issue, and I can't stress enough our dismay with this government's download of public health services on to municipalities and our concern that some municipalities are now not able to continue the ongoing funding for AIDS prevention programs. And AIDS is a problem for every community. It deserves provincial standards, provincial treatment, provincial application of those standards and those treatments.

We call on you again to honour World AIDS Day by moving to make some real difference in the lives of people living with HIV and AIDS. Bring back the nutritional supplement. Reduce the red tape. We need more than words; we need action.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise today in the Legislature to speak on this, the 12th annual World AIDS Day, a day that we acknowledge and honour both the people who are living with HIV and AIDS, their friends and their families who share in their pain and their struggle.

It is also a day to reiterate our government's strong commitment to do everything we can to prevent the spread of HIV. Health promotion and disease prevention, including the fight against HIV/AIDS, is a priority for our government. Since the disease was first diagnosed, more than 20,000 people have received this diagnosis in our province. In response, our government has committed more than \$52 million each year on an extensive range of HIV/AIDS services and programs. This includes prevention, outreach and support programs, HIV diagnostic and monitoring programs, HIV ambulatory clinics and special drug programs. The spending on these programs by our province exceeds that of any other level of government in Canada, including federal funding for the Canadian strategy on HIV/AIDS.

Last year on World AIDS Day I was pleased to announce the establishment of the prenatal HIV testing program. When women with HIV do not receive treat-

ment for their HIV during their pregnancy, their infants have a 15% to 30% chance of being infected. However, with treatment, the risk of infection to the baby is reduced significantly, to between 5% and 8%. Under this program, health service providers in Ontario are asked to offer HIV testing to all pregnant women as part of their routine prenatal care.

Education and prevention are important elements in controlling this disease, and in 1998 our government launched the \$10-million Ontario HIV Treatment Network. The network is a not-for-profit organization funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to ensure the very best care and treatment for people living with HIV in Ontario while at the same time respecting the rights of individuals to choice and confidentiality.

I'm very pleased to tell you that yesterday the Ontario HIV Treatment Network and the University of Toronto announced the establishment of the very first chair in HIV/AIDS research in Ontario through a \$1.5-million endowment from the Ministry of Health through the network's investigator-driven research fund. The chair will be responsible for stimulating innovative research in clinical science, epidemiology, public health and social science to help provide the foundation for developing the best ways to treat and prevent HIV and AIDS.

The creation of this chair further demonstrates the contribution by Ontario's AIDS community, a community of people living with HIV, health service providers, community workers and of course researchers. I would like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to these dedicated individuals. It is their work which helps to ensure the very best quality care and treatment for people living with HIV in Ontario.

I want to acknowledge as well the tireless efforts and the excellent advice of the entire Ontario Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS under the capable and excellent leadership of Mr David Hoe and Dr Don Kilby. Their work is extremely important in the ongoing fight against this condition.

We have by working together accomplished a great deal in this province, and we must continue to accomplish more as we work together. We must continue to fight prejudice in the workplace and the schoolyard about HIV and AIDS. We must reach more young people in our efforts to reduce the spread of HIV. We must support the search for a cure. We must continue to be open to listen, to educate and to communicate with our families, our co-workers, our neighbours and our children. We must, above all else, continue to offer support to our fellow Ontarians who are living with this devastating disease.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): In the members' gallery east is Gary Fox, the former member for Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings, a member of the 36th Parliament.

DEFERRED VOTES

MORE TAX CUTS FOR JOBS,
GROWTH AND PROSPERITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT DE NOUVEAU
LES IMPÔTS POUR STIMULER L'EMPLOI,
LA CROISSANCE ET LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 14, An Act to implement the 1999 Budget and to make other amendments to various Acts in order to foster an environment for jobs, growth and prosperity in Ontario / Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 1999 et à apporter d'autres modifications à diverses lois en vue de favoriser un climat propice à l'emploi, à la croissance et à la prospérité en Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1440 to 1445.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael D.	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	
Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan	

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Lankin, Frances	Smitherman, George
Curling, Alvin	Levac, David	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 39.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FIRE IN HAMILTON

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. Today in the gallery we are joined by Ontario's firefighters, brave men and women who, day in and day out, put it on the line to protect our lives and our homes. I believe that we as legislators should be doing everything we possibly can to back up our firefighters to ensure that their jobs are as safe as possible.

Two years ago the Plastimet facility in Hamilton burned for four days. That fire released dioxins at 66 times the so-called acceptable levels. Without the great work of Hamilton's firefighters in beating this fire down, matters would have been much worse.

I think we owe it to these firefighters and those right across Ontario to ensure we don't have another Plastimet anywhere in Ontario. I think the best way we can do that is to call a public inquiry so we can get to the bottom of what happened and come up with recommendations to ensure this is not repeated. On behalf of Ontario's firefighters, Premier, I'm asking you to call an inquiry into the Plastimet fire in Hamilton.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): First of all let me say that I, as Premier, and our caucus and our government share both your concern and your support and praise for Ontario's firefighters. That's why we have supported policies to encourage prevention and public education, and the new Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, makes it mandatory for municipalities to provide fire safety education, and other initiatives in these areas. I think that was the preamble to the question, which took most of the time.

On the specific question, we have indicated, as you know—and there may be more specifics the Minister of the Environment may have to give you—and we've been very clear, we would be fully supportive if the region wishes to call an inquiry.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, that's what you call "passing the buck." The question was to you. You have it fully within your authority to conduct an inquiry into this fire and you refuse to do so.

On the day of the Plastimet fire, some 255 firefighters in the Hamilton area literally put their lives on the line. Fighting fires is a tough enough job without having to worry about whether you're wading into some sea of toxic chemicals. Our firefighters are not asking for very much, just some basic health and safety protections to make their jobs safer.

What they are asking for—and this is the subject of this question now—is an independent provincial agency that will have full authority to investigate fires involving hazardous materials and identify what we can do to deal with fires involving hazardous waste.

Will you now back up our firefighters and will you establish a tough, independent body to safeguard their health and their lives?

Hon Mr Harris: Mr Speaker, the Minister of the Environment may have more information.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Again, on behalf of the government, let us put on record the bravery of the firefighters who, as a matter of their job, but they did it so well, contained that fire and ensured that it was not a worse tragedy than it was.

To date, we have spent more than \$2.1 million on debris cleanup and site security over the past two phases of the site cleanup. We've spent considerably more when laboratory costs and staff time are taken into account. These are cleanup actions that were instigated by the province of Ontario because that site was a site that needed that kind of help.

The key here is to learn from these tragedies, learn from these events, and ensure they do not happen again. We are in a position, I think, to say to anyone that if they have suggestions, if they have ideas, if they have ways that can prevent this in the future, we're always open to those kinds of suggestions and ideas.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): To the Premier, if he wants to slough it off to the other minister, he can do that.

Three times today, the members on the other side have indicated a true dedication and respect for the firefighters of our province. I want it pointed out that when all-party support was asked for, someone on that side said no.

My question is very simple, Premier. It's been asked twice now, and in the public gallery we have people who are listening very intently to your non-answers: Will you give us the answer to this simple question? Will you create the third-party group, the independent provincial lobby group, to investigate and to deal with these hazardous material fires?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, we are always looking for ideas that can protect the public more efficiently, but we've done more in acting than the opposition have done in terms of their rhetoric. We have acted to clean up the site. We have acted to ensure that the public safety is our top priority. If there are any other ideas out there that can help us with that goal, we're willing to listen to them because the public security, public safety, being able to be in your environment without that risk is our top priority.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I have a question for the Premier. It is now well accepted and generally recognized province-wide that when it comes to special education in Ontario we are in nothing less than a state of crisis. You have frozen the funding for special education for students with the highest needs when the demand itself is skyrocketing. That means, in

very real and practical terms, that our most vulnerable children at school are not having their needs met.

In Hamilton, 23 special-needs students were forced to stay home for two months while their school board scrambled to find money that you refused to give them.

It seems to me that we in this Legislature have a responsibility to ensure that our children who have special learning needs have those needs met. You're not doing that. Will you now stand up and agree to provide the additional funding that is absolutely essential to meet those needs of our special children with special learning needs?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Premier.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Education.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I really wish the honourable member would check his facts. We know there are changes that need to be made in how we better support children who have special needs. We've said that. We've been taking advice from the boards and the communities about how best to do that.

But I should like to remind the honourable member that we increased special education funding last year. We increased special education funding again this year. We are spending more today—

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The critic over there is saying no, we didn't. He was at estimates. He had the opportunity to ask staff about this if he was really interested in the facts. He didn't. I would like to remind them that we are spending more, because we believe it's a very important program to help support special needs students.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I suggest that you check your own ministry facts. The facts are that in 1998, with your new funding formula, you effectively cut \$106 million out of special education in Ontario. Those are the facts.

Let me tell you about an individual case so that you can better understand the reality of this. Let me tell you about Cody Lacelle. He's seven years of age. His disabilities make it very difficult for him to communicate and to understand what's going on around him. His speech is delayed. He has behavioural problems. Last year, he had a full-time educational assistant in a regular classroom. This year, as a result of your freeze, combined with soaring demand, help for Cody has been cut. He now spends only one hour a day in a regular class that only has a part-time educational assistant.

It seems to me, Minister, that we have a collective responsibility to help Cody and his parents get the best possible education. You're not doing that. Again, will you stand up now and commit to providing the funding that you have cut from special education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Perhaps the honourable member could have benefited from being at estimates, where we could have talked about where we have increased this money. We have put more money in there. If the honourable member has a magical solution for how we can improve special education he should put it forward,

because there is more money there. One of the challenges that we have with this particular issue is the boards keep saying to us they want more flexibility in how we give them the money. I have just as many parents who are sitting there saying they don't want the boards to have flexibility because in the past they've seen that money for special ed get spent on other things.

On the one hand, boards are saying, "Take the rules off," and I've got parents saying, "No, you need to continue to protect that money." Clearly, there are some changes here that need to be made. We have flagged that. We are working on that. But I would really like to caution the honourable member that there is more money in those boards. In Hamilton, it was an almost 5% increase in the money they got for special education—

The Speaker: Minister's time.

Mr McGuinty: There are 200,000 Ontario children with special education needs whom you are letting down on a consistent basis. Here's what the superintendents from Ontario's public supervisory officials had to say:

"'Seriously flawed' special education funding model puts our children at risk.... 'The government's contention that the special education funding formula provides adequate funds to meet the needs of special education students is simply not true.'"

Minister, I have with me five binders signed by 7,000 people in the Ottawa-Carleton area. We're talking about hundreds and hundreds of families who are looking to you to help them meet the basic learning needs of their children. You are letting them down. You have cut \$106 million out of special education funding in Ontario, and the results are apparent on the front lines. You're letting Ontario families down. I'm going to ask you once again on their behalf: Will you begin now to assume your responsibility and protect the interests of our most vulnerable children in our schools in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member would perhaps be of more assistance in helping us to resolve this issue with parents and boards out there if he tried to put some facts on the table. Maybe he wasn't listening when I told his critic that the figure that they keep saying is a cut is not a cut, it is no such thing, and the supervisory officers never made that claim.

First of all, I would like to say to the supervisory officers, when we went out the door and we said to the boards, "How much do you spend on special education funding?" they gave us a figure. We took that figure and topped it up. So if the number is wrong, perhaps those same supervisory officials would like to tell the ministry why they didn't know what they were spending on special education. Perhaps it could have been of more assistance as we sought to increase the support that special education students need. We understand it's an important support. We increased it this year, we increased it last year, and we're quite prepared to take steps to continue to improve this—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

1500

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. Today Ontario Campaign 2000 released its findings on child poverty and they are staggering. While child poverty has declined in the rest of Canada, it has increased here in Ontario by 6% under your government. Premier, you've called these numbers hogwash. Now that we have study after study that shows that child poverty is increasing faster than ever before in Ontario, is more of a problem than ever before in Ontario, how can you call these studies and numbers hogwash?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the question. Let me first off say that one child in poverty, for whatever reason or whoever's fault, is one child too many. I would say that in this, the best province in the best country in the world in which to live, one child in poverty is a disgrace and we have to do everything we can to solve that problem.

However, your question deals with a report that the United Nations says is hogwash. The United Nations says it is 6%, and this is in the key indicators to the labour market in 1999. Maryanne Webber, director of income statistics at Statistics Canada, says, "To use our statistics in that way is hogwash." It is hogwash, it is false information, it is very misleading to the public, but it does not take away from the fact that we must do everything we can to continue to reduce the number of children living in poverty in—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I'm glad you refer to this report, because this report that you cite isn't about child poverty. There is only one page in that whole report that makes any kind of reference to child poverty. It's about labour market issues. That shows the lengths to which your government will go to try to cover up your sorry record. I've looked at that study, and if you take the numbers out of that study, which has nothing to do with child poverty, it says that someone in Ontario should be able to survive on \$600 a month.

I challenge you, Premier. I'll take you up on this challenge. I'll go out and for one month—let's do the month of December—you and I will try to live by the numbers that come out of that report: \$600 a month. If you believe in that report, if you believe that the other studies are hogwash and the numbers that come out of that report are right, then you come with me, we'll go out on the street and we'll try to live on \$600 a month. Are you up to it, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me say that I think it's a great idea for the leader to take that challenge. I'll chat with him every day and see how he makes out over the month of December. I have no intention of doing that, nor would I expect anybody in Ontario to have any intention of doing that. I intend to stay here in this Legislature, to

continue to fight for the downtrodden, for the poor, for the low-income people of this province, to continue the battle.

The only study that was really attempted was done by Professor Chris Sarlo, who indicates that the number of children in poverty is declining in Ontario.

I intend to continue to fight in cabinet, in caucus, in the Legislature and across the province to continue to improve the lives of all Ontarians, particularly those of low income.

Mr Hampton: I think it's pretty clear we're finally getting to the hogwash here. That report is not about child poverty. That report that you cite has nothing to do with child poverty. It has only one page in it that makes any reference at all to child poverty, and you try to cite that to overcome the evidence that's come out of study after study.

Premier, the fact of the matter is, your government is making child poverty worse in this province. You've killed affordable housing. You've crippled rent controls. You've frozen the minimum wage for five years. You've cut child care. You've cut income supports for the poorest people in the province. You've made child poverty worse.

Premier, you can still come to the Legislature every day, but you put yourself on a \$600 budget for a month, I'll do the same and we'll see if your numbers are true or if they are the real hogwash. I extend the challenge again. If you believe your study, then let's go out there and try to survive on \$600 a month. Put your money where your study is.

Hon Mr Harris: I assume this is a reiteration, that the leader of the New Democratic Party plans to do this for a month. I accept his invitation that he should do it and I will watch with interest. I have told you what I will do. I will continue to cut taxes for low-income Ontarians. I will continue our pro-growth policies that have resulted in more than 615,000 net new jobs. I will continue the proposals that we brought in that saw 650,000 low-income earners pay no personal income tax in this province. I will continue to follow the policies of Professor Chris Sarlo, who prepared the only definitive study, who says child poverty is going down in this province. We intend to continue to do that.

I will check in, as I have indicated, with the leader, who has now unequivocally committed that he will live for the month of December on \$600 a month. It will be an interesting experiment. We look forward to the results.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to return to the crisis in cancer care waiting lists. Yesterday I raised concerns contained in a legal opinion to Princess Margaret Hospital. Today I have another legal opinion, this one by the firm of McMillan Binch, commissioned by Cancer Care Ontario in response to the Princess Margaret Hospital legal opinion. Minister, what a crying shame

that you've put the cancer system in the position of having to spend time and money on seeking legal opinions in order to manage the shortage of resources that you have caused.

I asked you three questions yesterday and you refused to answer. Today, I want to ask you to take two specific steps that everyone in the cancer system agrees with. First, and this is set out in both legal opinions, will you work with the partners in the system to immediately develop a standardized package of informed consent for cancer patients? Let them know what the waiting list should be of for weeks, let them know how long it's going to take to get their treatment, let them know how long it'll take if they go elsewhere, tell them if they wait longer that the risk of their condition worsening is very serious. Will you take the lead in developing an informed consent package?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to correct the record from yesterday. The honourable member indicated that this was a leaked document. This was not a leaked document; it wasn't a confidential document. It was actually a document that was discussed at the public board meeting on November 17, 1999. In fact, it has been referred back to a subcommittee for further consideration. So I think it's important to correct the record.

I would also just indicate that we do know that there is a difference of opinion. We have been very supportive in responding to the needs of the hospitals in providing the needed additional funding. I know that they are aggressively recruiting staff and through their efforts there has been an expanded capacity within the system. They are going to continue to aggressively deal with the waiting lists. I know that all of the cancer care hospitals in the province are doing everything they can to provide the best possible care—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Ms Lankin: Minister, the question was, will you take the lead in developing an information package for patients so they can truly give informed consent? Pretty simple, everyone's recommending it, that all three partners in the system work towards this. Will you do it?

1510

The second question is with respect to your program to pay for patients who require treatment who travel out of this area; for example, to Buffalo. Currently you have that program in place for patients with breast cancer and prostate cancer. Everyone agrees that if you would open up the criteria and include patients with rectal cancer and ovarian or uterine cancer you would help reduce the waiting list immediately. Until such time as the new radiation therapists come on stream, you could help the system by putting a little bit more money in and helping patients get treatment in a timely fashion. It's a shame that anyone has to go to the States, but you've created the crisis of the shortage of resources. You can help the system manage it instead of going off to get legal opinions about how to manage it.

Will you put together the package and will you increase and expand the criteria for people seeking treatment elsewhere?

1510

Hon Mrs Witmer: The honourable member probably has forgotten the fact that this is an issue that actually has occurred three times in this province during the past 10 years and it is only our government that has indicated that we want to find a long-lasting solution to the whole issue of waiting time. It is our government that has put together a nine-point strategy in order to avoid future problems.

As you know, we have expanded the capacity of the schools to train the radiation therapists; we are increasing the number of oncologists and physicists in the province; we are expanding the provincial capacity; and I know that the honourable member doesn't like to hear this but we have increased spending on reducing the waiting time by \$23.1 million. We have approved funding for radiation services on a cost-per-case basis so that CCO and PMH can expand the capacity without seeking the prior commitment of the ministry—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Premier. I would like to ask you whether you agree with your Minister of Education, because we have documented proof that your provincial government is responsible for creating a crisis for 200,000 Ontario students in special education.

I want to ask you if you agree, because there's a family here today. Danielle is here from Barrie with her mother, and they're here because of your government. Your government has made cuts. Last year Danielle, who has Down's syndrome, had a full-time educational assistant. She needs this educational assistant to reach her potential. She's a delightful girl, Premier. This year all that is offered is half time. This required the family, at one point, to keep Danielle away from school for three weeks because she has a tendency to wander off the school grounds and they were worried for her safety.

That board has received cuts of about 25% of their special education budget. That board has 616 new high-needs students this year that you are giving them no funding for.

Danielle and her mother are here to hear from you. Will your government take responsibility for the cuts they have inflicted on special education and will they—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the original question was, do I agree with my Minister of Education? Given the facts that this member and his party have presented to the Legislature, the mockery, that those in the know have said they pull figures out of the air, there's no relevance to them, it's a very easy choice for me: to agree with you or to agree with one of the finest ministers of education; to agree with the fact that there is more

money for Barrie for special education this year than last year. That's an indisputable fact.

You also raise the issue of a child and her mother who are here today, and we are happy to do everything we can to assist. We do not deliver the programs directly ourselves, but we do fund and we have funded their board with more money, so money is clearly not the problem. If there is another problem and we can assist, we would be glad to do so.

Mr Kennedy: You should really, now that you've decided to, look at this issue in its totality.

Here today also are public supervisory officials, and they have produced figures, Premier. I am going to send you a copy for your benefit. In these figures, they show \$9 million less to the Simcoe board, once your formula came in, than they were spending in 1997.

Interjection: Barrie.

Mr Kennedy: It's not just Barrie. It's \$20 million missing from Ottawa, it's the distress in Windsor and it's \$11 million missing from Durham. There is a crisis across the province.

Today we have with us Gloria Smith. Gloria Smith has been mentioned before, by my colleague from York West, because her son Jonathan is not in school. He's 14 years old. Last year he was in a special education class. This year he's been offered three hours per week only. That's all the support you're willing to give him.

Premier, I want you to stand in your place and tell these families, tell these school board officials who have identified the cuts you've made, that you're going to change things, that you agree that something's wrong, you're going to take responsibility for it, and things will get better for special-needs students in this province, starting today.

Hon Mr Harris: I think it's a matter of record that we have increased funding and we are putting more money into these boards. I would also say that in addition to more money, we have set a minimum amount—no maximum amount with the new money and the more money they get—that must be spent on special education and on special needs. There's been no freezing of money. We've said there is a minimum. For the first time in the history of this province they can't take that money and spend it on other things, but with the more money, if the board officials can't run the board, then resign and we'll run it. We'll make sure that special-needs kids are not the ones who are going to be cut.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. My riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant is largely a rural riding, which presents certain challenges to the government in terms of providing services to residents of sparsely populated areas. Many of the issues my constituents face are shared by those you represent in your role as minister responsible for northern Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I cannot hear the question. When the member is down at the other end, I need order so I can hear the question.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. As I was wanting to explain, many of the issues that my constituents face are shared by those you represent in your role as minister responsible for northern Ontario.

One of these issues is the provision of health care services and the recruitment and retention of medical professionals. In 1997, the University of Toronto published a report on physician distribution in Ontario, and they published their findings in the Canadian Family Physician. I think the results of this study served as a wake-up call to many. The U of T report found that Haldimand-Norfolk was the second most underserved area in the province for family physicians, behind only Sudbury district. Attracting a sufficient number of nurses, nurse practitioners, family physicians and specialists is a challenge that northern communities have been facing for decades as we—

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I extended the member's time. Minister.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the comments and the question from the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. I want to commend him for his leadership in his riding on the rural health care issue. I appreciate his interest similarly in health care in northern Ontario.

To get to the point of the matter, yes, my ministry is working to support the work of Minister Witmer and the Ministry of Health in providing access to health care services in northern Ontario. We're trying to build upon the good work in the rural and northern Ontario health framework.

For example, my ministry supports and funds the annual health professionals recruitment tour. We recently announced funding for Think North, a "made in the north, by the north, for the north" solution for CD-ROMs and Web sites that we have funded that's getting good press in northern Ontario.

As well, I had the opportunity—

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Why don't you fund it completely? Tell the truth.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat. I would ask the member to withdraw that, please.

Mr Bartolucci: To "tell the truth"?

The Speaker: I'm sorry. Please withdraw it.

Mr Bartolucci: I withdraw it.

Hon Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As well, to confer with Dr McKendry—

Mr Bartolucci: Tell the truth.

The Speaker: Take a seat. Last warning for the member for Sudbury. I will have to name him if he shouts out like that again. Last warning.

Minister?

Hon Mr Hudak: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As well, the opportunity to convey what I've heard from northerners to Dr McKendry, the minister's fact-finder on this

issue and, very important, to the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp, a program to support small community health care on the capital side, and we will continue to make announcements in that vein as well.

1520

Mr Barrett: I think we agree that all Ontarians, regardless of where they live, deserve to have access to top-quality health care services close to home. Many of my constituents have expressed their support for the government's approach to ensuring that rural health care needs are met. Recognizing the unique needs of these communities was a first step in providing appropriate facilities and services in small towns throughout Ontario. The changes the government is implementing have not always been easy, but the new direction the government has taken is a welcome and long-overdue change for rural Ontarians.

Minister, I have a question. What role have you as Minister of Northern Development played in ensuring that the health care needs of northerners are met?

Hon Mr Hudak: To answer to the member's question, in addition to the point that I mentioned earlier, we have announced \$5 million to date for 60 small health facilities across northern Ontario. I was in Kenora just over a week ago where I announced \$3.2 million in funding for 38 different health facilities in the Kenora-Fort Frances area. I was in Timmins just last week to announce \$1.2 million in support of 12 facilities in north-eastern Ontario, and as well most recently in announcing \$1 million in assistance for eight health facilities in the Algoma district.

To answer the member's question to name a few, in Wawa, for example, our government provided \$230,000 for an enhanced ultrasound system and other new medical equipment for the Lady Dunn Hospital and \$50,000 to improve energy efficiency at the Wawa Medical Centre. The St Joseph's Health Centre in Blind River will receive \$350,000 for renovations, and finally, the Thessalon Hospital and Algoma Manor will be renovated and improved thanks to \$100,000 in funding through the heritage fund of this government. That is our continuing dedication to improving access to health care in northern Ontario.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Bernadette MacNeil is a grade 3 student in my riding. She has a neurological disorder and requires a full-time educational assistant. You see, that's what her medical assessment says. In the past she has received that support, but this year you placed a cap on ISA grant funding for special education. This year, her classroom assistance was cut in half. Her parents acknowledged that the board of education has done all that it can do, but they know that you have taken control of education funding and all matters in education under infamous Bill 160.

My question for you, Minister, is simply this: Your decision to freeze special education has made things worse for the kids in our classrooms. Bernadette's classroom support has been cut in half. Will you stop making excuses, will you stop giving us spin, will you stop trying to blame others and will you commit today to restore full funding and full support for Bernadette and for her education?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I must confess to being a tad confused about why the honourable member would think spending \$1.2 billion on special education is spin. I would also like to say again that we started with what the board told us they needed for special education. We then topped up last year by \$127 million, this year by an additional—maybe they don't know how to add, but an additional \$32 million, because we recognize that these supports are very important.

I can point to all kinds of boards that have had increases as high as 100% in their special education funding. If they can't take that money and put it where it needs to be put—with the students—perhaps we should give them assistance to do that. Perhaps the parents should ask what happened to that money.

We know there are challenges with this program. We've said that we're working with the boards to try and do a better job. If changes need to be made, we're prepared to make changes. We've said that time and again. But as I've said to the honourable member, they're not bringing forward any solutions here. All they keep doing is—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up. Supplementary.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Keith and Spencer and Stephen and Kyle and Matthew and Michael and Ian and Thomas and Christopher and Brenda are just 10 of the students who are receiving special education support in Thunder Bay. Their parents, along with many others, have written to express their concern that the support for their children will be lost at the end of this month unless you do something about special education funding.

You are providing funding for only half the children in the Lakehead separate school board who need support. These are children that your ministry has agreed need support. They fit into even the restrictive criteria that you put in place for them to be eligible for funding. But you froze this board's funding, so these students lose out.

The board has been providing support to these students out of their reserve funds, but the board's reserve funds run out at the end of December. This is one of 64 out of 72 boards that have a shortfall in their special education funding.

Minister, will you tell the parents of Keith and Spencer and Stephen and Kyle and Matthew and Michael and Ian and Thomas and Christopher and Brenda that you will provide the support you promised to them?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate that the honourable members have some special guests in the gallery that they want to get these questions on the record for.

I would like to say to the honourable member that the Lakehead board received almost 40% more in special education funding. We have given this board more money for special education. We understand there are changes that may well need to be necessary. We were told that we needed to protect funding and that we needed to have layers of funding so that children with more needs got more money. We did that. We were told there needed to be more money. We did that as well. Twice we did that, I would like to remind the honourable member.

We remain committed to working with all the boards to try and improve the special education supports that our children get, and we stand by that commitment.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, recently the federal government announced \$170 million in assistance for farmers. However, there have been accusations by some that those dollars are not finding their way into the hands of Ontario farmers. For example, the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London stated on November 17 that "Millions of dollars are waiting in Ottawa to be distributed to Ontario farmers ... and the money is ready to go."

Minister, is this true? Could you set the record straight for Ontario's hard-working farm families?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank my friend and colleague from Simcoe North for the question and for providing me with the opportunity to indeed set the record straight. I want to assure the member, all members of this Legislature and all the hard-working farmers of Ontario that the province is not holding any money. In fact, the province is dedicated to making sure that Ontario farmers receive their fair share of the federal funding as quickly as possible.

We are presently negotiating with the federal government and discussing with farm leaders the best possible way that we can implement the changes that were announced by the federal minister in the whole farm relief program that he suggested would be funded through that \$170 million.

The federal government is presently not in the position to flow any of the money that was announced. Moreover, we were informed by federal officials that the federal minister has not yet received Treasury Board approval to fund any of this money for any of the farmers in Ontario.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you for the clarification. I'm sure the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London will be pleased to hear that Ontario is not holding up federal payments to Ontario farmers.

Minister, I understand you will be attending a meeting of provincial and federal agriculture ministers next week

here in Toronto. Could you inform the House what our government's priority will be at that meeting?

Hon Mr Hardeman: Indeed we are meeting with all our provincial colleagues and the federal minister next week to discuss the agreement that we have with the federal government as it relates to farm safety nets. I want to reiterate that our government has consistently stated that the time has come for the federal government to give Ontario farmers their fair share of the federal safety net program.

Ontario presently produces 23% of the farm product and receives 16% of the farm safety net program. We do not deem that appropriate or fair for Ontario's farmers.

I also want to state that Ontario is on record and will continue to fund 40 cents of every dollar that the safety net program provides. Again, we are committed to funding the 40-60 split for the farmers of Ontario.

Hopefully we all can iron something out very quickly so we can get that program in place for Ontario's hard-pressed farmers.

1530

TORONTO COUNCIL

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Is the Premier going to be here?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier is coming.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this summer your former Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr Gilchrist, was asked if your government intended to set the number of city councillors for the city of Toronto. He replied, this summer, that it was up to the city to make that decision. Thousands of taxpayers and citizens in the city itself took your government at your word. They went through the OMB process to set the number of wards. A lot of money was expended on that process. The OMB responded and said there should be 58 wards. Yet we find that your government is now going to totally ignore the OMB process and totally ignore what your minister said.

How do you justify putting the city of Toronto, the citizens of Toronto, the taxpayers of Toronto, and the Ontario Municipal Board through a long and considered process, and now your government says: "We don't care what they think; we don't care what they say. We're simply going to wipe this out"? How do you justify that, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The same way that the mayor of the city of Toronto, Mel Lastman, said this morning on CFRB: "We'll do it. We'll go to 44. Let us do it."

Mr Hampton: This is not about Mayor Lastman. This is about the citizens of this province, the citizens of this city, who took your government at their word. They went to the Ontario Municipal Board. Many of them invested many hours and a lot of their own money. It's about the city, which also went there to work through with the

Ontario Municipal Board a process where these issues would be arrived at after due consideration.

Now your government comes along and says: "We don't care what we said in July. We don't care about all the people who worked so hard on this. We don't care about the people who went to the municipal board. We don't care about the municipal board decision."

Premier, if you're going to simply override all of the legal process, if you're going to simply override all of the democratic process, if you believe your government knows absolutely the truth and what should be done, then why don't you put your decision up for public hearings? You've got a week, a week and a half. You can hold public hearings. Why not let the people have a say before you simply go along and ignore all the work that's been done?

Hon Mr Harris: It is my understanding, not having seen the OMB ruling, that they ruled not on the number of ridings but on boundaries.

Mel Lastman today on CFRB said, "We know the public would prefer 44 to 58." He said, "I think they'd prefer 30." I think 22 sounds pretty good myself and is probably more than enough to run the city of Toronto.

That's why we are consulting with the city of Toronto. The minister has written a letter to seek input. It has provoked a very vigorous and interesting debate. The good news in the debate is that it's all for fewer politicians and less cost to the taxpayers, and I think they're in favour of that.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Premier of Ontario. This question is in regard to a fire from 1987. It was a horticultural fire where 69 firefighters from Kitchener, out of a force of 200, fought this fire.

Since that time, six people involved with that fire have died of cancer. Since that time, we've read reports that spoke about the flames they fought, "smoke and flame that was the colour of every rainbow." It obviously meant that it was toxic. Since that fire, four babies were born with birth defects to people who were involved with that fire. Since that time, 16 claims were made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, claims for the firefighters or for their widows.

Premier, in light of the fact that not one of the claims was accepted, I'd like to know what you feel your responsibility is to firefighters, to the people who put their lives at risk every day for all Ontarians. How do you feel that you as the Premier are responsible to these individuals?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): My responsibility is to ask the minister responsible to respond.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you for the question. I met with the association yesterday, as a matter of fact. I was there for about an hour and we had a long and, I think, in-depth discussion on the issue. The question was put to me with respect to the issue you

speak about. We at the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB have given them the undertaking to review the situation, as we had since this situation was brought to our attention. There has been a committee struck and they're reviewing the recommendations that were brought forth. It is a slow process, I agree. It's difficult, and in the meantime the issues are being dealt with on a case-by-case basis. I appreciate the concerns the firefighters brought to my attention. I dealt with the issues very directly and told them that as soon as we can we will make the appropriate decisions. You understand it's a binding decision that locks you in for virtually eternity. It's a very difficult decision. We don't underestimate the great things the firefighters do in this province, but you have to understand, you have to appreciate the issue and the substance. We accept their report and we will be reporting back soon.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It wasn't 10 years. This report was commissioned, I think, in 1997. That's when the report began.

Mrs Pupatello: All of those studies and the length of time that you appreciate it takes to go through all of this is great. Minister, let me tell you (a) we're disappointed that the Premier doesn't want to stand up and say what he feels his responsibility is as the Premier of Ontario, and (b) let me just quote from a report. This was written by a member of the board of directors of this same Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, but it was submitted to you in September 1998. It's been in your hands for some time and it says: "Mortality among those present at the horticultural technology fire was higher than the provincial average. This equates to a cancer rate 10 times higher than the provincial average."

Minister, it's fine for you to be kind and give reasoned and assuring words; what these individuals—16 claimants—are looking forward to, what the widows are looking forward to is to have you stand up in the House today and say, "We think it's worth it that they put their lives at risk for us every day and we will take care of people who are beset by cancer because they are fighting for us."

Hon Mr Stockwell: Clearly anyone on this side of the House would be happy and joyful to stand up and meet the commitments and criteria you make. We have an obligation to the firefighters who were fighting that fire. We appreciate the fact that there's a very serious issue at hand here. No one is slowing this process down for anything less than compassionate reasons. No one has cornered the market with respect to the firefighters, those people who work for us and what a debilitating and difficult job they have, particularly in these circumstances. I would never be party to any process that would slow down payments to widows and children of firefighters.

With the greatest of respect, you may take a slight at the Premier in your original question. We have tried to deal with it. It has been a long-term issue. I have given you my undertaking that we will deal with this as quickly as we possibly can. I'm telling you, we will deal with it. If I could stand up and wave a magic wand and fix it, of

course I would. We can't. We give you our undertaking. We will report back as soon as humanly possible.

1540

TRUCKING INDUSTRY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you would know from the economic statement yesterday that the Ontario economy is hot. Many small businesses are expanding because of export activities, and of course export activities put pressure on the trucking industry. You know that many jurisdictions in the United States are putting pressure on you and Ontario to join the international registration plan. I know that many states are threatening to remove the reciprocal agreements that allow the free trade of truckers and free movement within the United States.

Minister, would you stand in your place today and tell the people of Ontario what efforts you and our government are taking to join as quickly as possible the international registration plan.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): My colleague asks an important question. Indeed, as I am sure he is aware, the Legislature is currently considering amendments to the Highway Traffic Act, through the Red Tape Reduction Act. This will allow Ontario to apply for membership in the international registration plan. If this legislation is passed, the red tape bill will allow us to join through a ballot application to the IRP for membership. The effective date would be November 1, 2000.

This would be very advantageous to the Ontario economy. IRP membership will allow Ontario commercial motor vehicles unrestricted access to all North American jurisdictions. We will ensure the continuity of Ontario-US trading relationships and the competitiveness of carriers. IRP membership meets the government's key priorities to eliminate—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, time is up.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that comprehensive response, Minister. I'm pleased that Bill 11 is being discussed. I'm speaking on it this afternoon and I'll be sure to follow up on your remarks. This is very important. In fact I might say, Minister, this is a very critical issue, as you know. For Ontario's economy to remain competitive, we need swift and decisive action and I know we can count on you. Could you tell me and reassure the competitiveness of our trucking industry?

Hon Mr Turnbull: An equally good follow-up question. We're working to improve the competitiveness of Ontario, competitiveness that the opposition parties wouldn't understand. We have currently two major initiatives. One, the MTO is working closely with industry and the Quebec government—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor West, come to order, please.

Hon Mr Turnbull: We're working with the Quebec government to develop a proposal for comparable vehicle

weights and dimensions standards. Quebec is a key trading partner with Ontario. Resolution of this will allow the industry to make decisions in terms of truck purchasing equipment.

The second initiative we are participating in is the automated vehicle identification program called Avion. This is a pilot program with the US which allows us to electronically clear vehicles. After one stop in the day, they are cleared all through North America for the balance of that day. It helps to ensure our competitiveness and it makes us more cost competitive and improves our—

The Speaker: The Minister's time is up.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the Premier. Last week when the report card on child poverty was released, you called it "hogwash" and said it was based on false data. I'm sure your staff have advised you that today there was a report that more specifically addresses the situation of child poverty in Ontario. The facts and figures and the statements in this are quite distressing.

I would point out that one in five children now in Ontario lives in poverty. In addition, since 1989 the number of poor children has increased by 118%. The number of children in poor working families has increased by 142%. The number of poor children in families with full-time, full-year employment has increased by 105%. The number of children in families experiencing long-term unemployment has increased by 81%. The number of children in families with total incomes less than \$20,000 has increased by 137%.

Premier, I believe your policies are directly responsible for this situation. When are you going to do something significant to stop the trend of increasing child poverty in Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The report today is based on the same hogwash statistics, which could not be applied to child poverty. They come from Statistics Canada, and Statistics Canada says to use these statistics—the word "poverty" or any relation to poverty is incorrect. It says there is no official definition of "poverty."

It goes on to say that in spite of efforts of different interest groups, there is still no internationally accepted definition of "poverty." There have been some attempts internationally, such as the United Nations which presents a very different picture of some 6% across Canada and declining.

There has been an attempt by Professor Sarlo to look at real poverty. In his Canadian Living Standards: 1998 Report, published by the Fraser Institute, "I was pleased to report that, using income as an indicator, the incidence of child poverty has decreased." You see, when I said the report was hogwash, it's based on hogwash statistics.

Mr Patten: You can use any definition you want. You can challenge, perhaps, the benchmark, but the fact is it is

a benchmark. It's comparative year by year and it also looked at the other provinces in the rest of Canada. The fact remains that there is a growth in child poverty. You may not agree with the particular benchmark used. It happens to be that families with children with \$20,000 worth of income have increased, those families in the lower areas. That means that we have more children who are suffering.

I look at some of the other factors of—or you stand up and you tell me that there is less child poverty today and share what your benchmark is. The fact is you cut welfare rates. It's more difficult for many families to find affordable rental housing. You've gotten out of the social housing business. We now have a major problem in this particular province. You cut education by \$1.2 billion and that has affected a lot of kids, especially children with special needs.

I ask you again, when will you do something significant to change the trend of having more and more children move into child poverty in Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: The statistic that is being used and was used by the group today in fact measures the exact opposite. What it measures is, if a jurisdiction grows the middle class, if you're creating more jobs, more wealth, if people are better off today, if working Ontarians are better off, then the statistics will show that there are more who are below that median average. What the statistics actually show is tremendous growth of net wealth of the middle class, exactly as we said we would do.

When you have any objective measure, it shows the number of children living in poverty in this province declining, declining vis-à-vis the rest of Canada and declining vis-à-vis last year and the year before. Having said that, one child living in poverty, by anybody's definition, is one child too many, which is why we must continue to be vigilant and do even more in the future.

WORKFARE

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'd like to ask you a question that is of great interest to my constituents in Scarborough Southwest. I read with interest your announcement of a workfare action plan fulfilling one more of our government's Blueprint commitments. I'm pleased to see that you're moving to increase community placements in municipalities across the province. By giving people of Ontario on welfare the opportunity to gain invaluable skills, experience and contacts through community placements, you help to move them towards a paying job.

I know that welfare reform is a challenging process. It's my understanding that you are actually rewarding municipalities that exceed their targets for workfare placements. I want to know what you are going to do to support municipalities to help them reach those goals.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Helping people move from welfare to work is a

tremendous priority for this government. We couldn't have achieved the outstanding results that we have across Ontario without the support of our delivery agents, the municipalities around the province. More than 450,000 people have been able to break the cycle of welfare dependency. That's a tremendous benefit of hope and opportunity for these people.

I can see, though, our friends in the Liberal Party don't like work for welfare because their welfare reform policies were written by an insurance adjuster. They just want to write people off. They don't care about helping people move from welfare to work. What they care about is cottagefare. Cottagefare is no fair to the hard-working taxpayers of this province.

PETITIONS

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It's nice to be able to talk again. This petition was signed by several people known as the Friends of Sudbury Firefighters. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas firefighters risk their lives to protect the lives and property of their neighbours;

"Whereas firefighters and the citizens of Ontario have a right to be assured that their provincial government is doing all it can to protect them;

"Whereas local investigations of workplace hazards can be marred by a conflict of interest and are often less than conclusive nor impartial;

"Whereas the ability to enforce safety and health requirements is essential to protect firefighters, other workers and the citizens of Ontario; and

"Whereas a provincial agency, backed by full investigative authority, will produce more useful and more credible analysis;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the establishment of a provincial agency to investigate hazardous work sites and workplace safety rules similar to the powers given to agencies in the United States."

I have affixed my signature to this large petition as I am in complete agreement with it.

1550

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens)" like those that our firefighters faced on the Plastimet site;

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances in the workplace;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

I continue to support the petitioners who are calling on the government to take this action.

ABORTION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a certified petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario health system is overburdened and unnecessary spending must be cut; and

"Whereas pregnancy is not a disease, injury or illness and abortions are not therapeutic procedures; and

"Whereas the vast majority of abortions are done for reasons of convenience or finance; and

"Whereas the province has the exclusive authority to determine what services will be insured; and

"Whereas the Canada Health Act does not require funding for elective procedures; and

"Whereas there is mounting evidence that abortion is in fact hazardous to women's health; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers funded over 45,000 abortions in 1993 at an estimated cost of \$25 million;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to cease from providing any taxpayers' dollars for the performance of abortions."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members

who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I add my name to those of these petitioners.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 11, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting four new Acts, the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet at 6:45 pm on Monday, December 6, 1999 for the purpose of considering the bill;

That, at such time, the Chair shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and that any divisions required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a);

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration and not later than December 7, 1999. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House;

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That, when the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At the end of the sessional day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bells shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure to rise in the House in support. The minister has just moved the minute with respect to the time allocation motion and the importance of dealing with red tape as urgently as possible. As you would know, Mr Speaker, Bill 11, the act to reduce red tape, is indeed a central part to the plan of our

government to eliminate barriers to growth and opportunity for the hard-working people of Ontario.

I would ask all members to reflect on the importance of this to small business. The more barriers you create, the more you block people from having opportunities to complete their own self-reliance and their own support systems. It may be in some people's interest to create the bureaucracy and create the red tape, to keep the old system going that really blocks people out, small independent people who really need an opportunity.

So I see this whole bill as a story about jobs and hope and opportunity, and I know this is shared by the member from Scarborough Southwest, who's with me today and paying some attention, although he is reading right now, but also the member from Brampton Centre, who I know has worked tirelessly in his riding for economic development. I can't say enough about him. In fact, if he gave me some notes, I'd probably read them on the record for him.

But I think it's just one in a series of initiatives that the government has committed to in the Blueprint plan. And you know, it's a rigorous and most difficult challenge.

Why do I say that? As I look around my riding of Durham, I know that there are many new small businesses. I met this morning with Linda Zeisner from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and she told me the work she's doing with the small tourism operators and the people in my riding of Durham. She's up in Tyrone talking to people and she's in Enniskillen and Blackstock and Crooked Creek, to name but four.

I feel that working together is how we can move forward in a new economy, a new order in this province, and I think of our Premier as being a person with the conviction and a vision and determination to examine the concerns that are brought to his attention, but to move forward, always moving forward to give people hope and raise that flag on the mountaintop for the people to look forward to. Every once in a while we all need to be refreshed and restimulated, encouraged and refocused.

1600

It was an inspiration to me yesterday to listen to our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, a man with great control oratorically and financially, you might say, bring a report to the people of Ontario, an update, if you will, a report card about the status of where we are. I wasn't surprised. There was some trepidation but I wasn't surprised to hear that it was genuinely good news. I would question anyone in the House here today, although there are only three on the opposition side, which is good because they can't stand and ring the bells—there have to be five of them. I would say, though, that the numbers speak for themselves. This isn't politics. It's like the public accounts auditor, Erik Peters. His report card is a very important barometer, although it lags somewhat behind the actual activities of the day.

The report card that we get and monitor all the time is Statistics Canada. It's a scientific tool or measurement of prosperity, really. They report the GDP in Ontario at 5%, the highest growth not just in Canada but in the G7.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Is that projected or over the year?

Mr O'Toole: That's the actual current reporting mechanism. Let's not try to make it more difficult for the people of Ontario. That is more of the red tape and bureaucracy that this whole bill is trying to address, to eliminate those ambiguous things that have been a bureaucratic problem for the last—

Interjection: A barrier.

Mr O'Toole: It's a barrier, I agree.

I want to report for the record the important picture of where we've come. It's like *A Tale of Two Cities*. It's a tale of some woe but there is light at the end of the tunnel.

You've always got to justify the motive here. When we started in 1995, we were spending \$1 million an hour more than we were taking in as revenue. Don't ever forget where we came from. Don't ever forget the poverty that Ontario and its citizens were moving towards. It really saddens me.

I think of my five children. If I may, for the record, I'll name them. Erin, who lives in Halifax, got engaged yesterday. A great kid; congratulations. My next daughter, Rebecca, is married and lives in Australia. Her husband is a CF18 pilot and very proud of her. He's involved in East Timor. This may not be relevant to this particular bill, but it's relevant to me. It's my life. This is my life; this is your life. Then Marnie, who's in teachers' college at Lakehead University, actually teaching now for the first time. She loves it. She thinks it's wonderful. A lot of work, yes, but she loves it, though, and it's the love that is driving her to do it. Andrew and Rochelle are both at university, one at the University of Windsor and one at Brock University, and I'm looking forward to them being home for Christmas.

The point is, I think about them. When I think about the economy, I think about their future. It's important, when we report the opportunities for young people, and if you want to tie this whole dialogue or monologue together, you can see that in 1995 hope and opportunity were gone, in 1999-2000 hope and opportunity are returning. It's been very difficult. It takes tough leadership to make some of the tough decisions, but the light is there.

Mr Eves reported yesterday that the deficit is way ahead of target. You will be pleased to know that the deficit itself is—I'm reading this because I should never depend on my memory—\$1 billion ahead of where it had been forecast in our budget. There is increased revenue. Why is there increased revenue? It's part of the very important economic model that our Premier and ministry have set up: that reducing taxes actually increases revenue, kind of the Robin Hood theory. It's here. It's right in the public accounts record here, the Ontario finance quarterly report. That's when I draw it back. In 1995, bad news, \$1 million an hour more than we were taking in. The choice on the other side was to increase taxes. That's what they did for 10 years. Increasing taxes reduces

revenue; bigger deficits; higher debt. It's an endless spiral.

I've got to address the issue. The issue is clear. The results are here, the numbers. All the politics and all those things—at the end of the day I'm confident that we're on the right track and there's more to be done. We're not there yet but we've almost planted the flag on top of Hiroshima. You know what I'm saying, it's kind of the quest. But it takes determination. Leadership is about setting goals and sticking to them, and so clearly we're there.

Again, I think for the public they should know the numbers specifically. Our revenue has actually moved up. Taxes down, revenue up. You remember those lines? It's critical to the whole model that I'm trying to define for you here.

Actual revenue in 1995-96 was \$49.4 billion; 1999-2000 outlook, \$59 billion—up \$10 billion. Remember the equation here: reduced taxes, increased revenue. You want to draw a parallel line here or at least a complementary line—it's kind of like a regression analysis we're doing here, but the deficit has moved from \$11 billion down to \$1.026 billion. Do you see the correlation here?

This is very fundamental to the whole new economy model that we're trying to address, and the opposition and third party, as our Premier said today, just don't get it. The solutions are just not there in their policies. But the people of Ontario can't be fooled. They spoke out rather effectively—certainly I can only address my riding—in June 1999. They said: "Mr Premier, your job's not done. There's a mandate to continue the job patiently and with compassion." That's exactly what I see happening across all the ministries. Taking that second look, making sure that the issues are being correctly addressed, whether it's special education, funding of education, the funding of health care. It's coming together and I'm confident. It's not just numbers; it's having a model that looks after people's needs and priorities.

That's what the Red Tape Bill is all about. When I come back and try to withdraw the number argument, and I think of some of the small business obstacles and barriers—if they want to create, for instance, a small pizza shop and they go in and get the building permit and the permit to operate, we've reduced the regulations for business registration from months to minutes. We as a government have done that, and I could outline a number of other issues that would address just that one sector. But the theme is demonstrated in what I just told you in almost every one—of course it's a very large, comprehensive bill, but we're dealing with thousands of regulations and there's a lot more to be done.

I expect that although this will involve that they will have to read and participate in our policy and plan, they will support this bill. If they don't then they're voting against small business. That's the record that has to stand. We can all argue at the micro level, the small, little, it'sy-bitsy things that aren't solved, that we have to look at the whole policy, but we are moving forward by removing the regulations that I just mentioned.

I think though that if I am still looking at the theory is that tax cuts create economy, which creates jobs, which cuts down on the social costs of government, that's it in a nutshell. I'm not trying to oversimplify it. Please allow me the permission to sketch the picture here for the people who may be listening this afternoon.

Our Premier, Mike Harris, is a leader with courage and vision, and I can assure you he is a man of passion and commitment as well. I'm not so sure though on the other side. It's this ambiguous response during question period, picking up on every little group that yells and wiggles. They jump to their side one day. The opposition and third party don't seem to have a policy.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): They're wishy-washy.

Mr O'Toole: They're wishy-washy. I can tell you, I've got a copy of their plan, the 20/20. I always felt that hindsight was 20/20. Imagine that the name of their plan was 20/20. Even in question period today, asking questions about issues that are eight years old—look to the future, look to the new economy and let's move forward. Of course all governments have made mistakes. We refer to it as the lost decade. Let's move forward.

I know that today the Premier, speaking about the state of our justice system and the state of the system of making criminals accountable for their actions, was rather disdainfully received by the third party and the opposition. They seem to be saying that they agree with the Young Offenders Act. Clearly, our government doesn't. We believe that criminals should pay the price and we believe that the victims should be defended.

1610

They're going to be talking to Anne McLellan and Allan Rock, and I don't think they're going to be listening. In fact, I heard Attorney General Flaherty this morning on the radio. He said it's just the Young Offenders Act; all they put on it was a new cover. That may be true. I haven't read the particular amendments.

But there is a very interesting article that I think I want on the record about what the federal government is doing. They still haven't got it. This is being quoted from Maclean's magazine, November 29, 1999. So it's the most current issue. The article is entitled, "Taxing Times in Ottawa." I would recommend that all constituents call my constituency office if you want a copy, because I don't want to burden you with the cost of buying one.

Interjection: What's the number?

Mr O'Toole: My number at the constituency office is 697-1501, area code 905. We would definitely get you a copy of this article because it's a balanced article. This article says, "Payroll deductions are on their way up, not down."

Every Premier and leader of any description in Ontario, and indeed Canada, is calling on Paul Martin to cut taxes. We all heard the debate, if you were watching some of the information on television recently, about the huge—the Auditor General of Canada yesterday mentioned it in his report—surplus in the EI fund. It's almost disgusting. That employment insurance surplus is

actually hard-working taxpayers' money. They're taking it into general revenue, and what are they doing with it? They're overtaxing people at all levels. That's just one example that the auditor happened to mention that I picked up on.

But here's what the article by Mary Janigan states. For instance, she said a senior research associate at the Canadian Tax Foundation talked about "the take-home pay of a single taxpayer earning \$39,000 per year when the clock chimes midnight at New Year's." What is the impact on their actual take-home disposable income? Guess what? The big changes announced come to \$31.41 a year. A \$31.41-a-year reduction is not acceptable.

In fact, the article goes on to say that this shell game that's going on federally is because as the Canada pension plan premiums actually go up, there's more of a tax burden on the middle-class working family. So they don't get it. If you give people back their money, those people will actually generate the economy. It goes back to Bill 11.

I suspect there will be other people who want to speak on this bill. I'm just trying to find out exactly who they are. These people would want to speak on the bill, I know, but I have a few more things to say.

As I said, the bill actually amends, I believe, 11 different acts. The AgriCorp Act is amended. The Bees Act is amended. Many of these are old, outdated acts. The Crop Insurance Act, 1996, is amended. The Farm Implements Act is amended or changes are made. This is the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. It repeals the schedule of the Artificial Insemination of Livestock Act, for instance.

Schedule B has amendments proposed by the Ministry of the Attorney General. As I said, almost every ministry has participated in this business-plan approach to reducing barriers to opportunities.

I'm the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, and schedule F has amendments proposed by that particular ministry. I think the Business Corporations Act is long overdue, the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act. I pay particular attention to that because I see the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations in sort of a model that looks like this. I see on the one side myself as a consumer. I see the consumer, the person who needs protection, who needs to make sure that there's some assurance of quality and cost and service to a product. On the other side of that scale, I see the provider of a service or product. The consumer ministry must be the balance to find a balance between those two competing objectives: the vendor and the purchaser of service or goods.

That ministry—and I paid particularly close attention to that role—I think is finding a balance, which is what you're always looking for, and fairness. At the end of the day we can all look at the challenges to the consumer today. But again, this bill, in its broadest sense, addresses many outdated arguments that needed to be addressed: land titles; the Liquor Licence Act—streamlining appears

there; the Marriage Act; the Registry Act; and I could go on.

I think there's a total of, as I said—yes, there it is. It's just about the end here. Schedule R is the last schedule, so S corrects errors in French versions of the Archives Act. It's cleaning up the legislative calendar, it's cleaning up the legislative statutes and making amendments with respect to various applications and processes. Again, it does come back to eliminating barriers, eliminating unnecessary loopholes and red tape, and streamlining the process, which is part of making it a more competitive way of doing business in the province.

The province of Ontario represents about 30% of the population of Canada, but it also represents about 60% of the economy of Canada. So as Canada goes, it's sort of a reflection of how Ontario is going. If Ontario is going into a slump, then of course Canada gets dragged down into that.

I'm pleased that there are many issues that will be brought up by the opposition and the third party, but I think it's important for the viewer and consumer today to realize that many of these changes are needed to be competitive in a new global economy and to make services work for people. I'm all in support of it.

There are other members who want to share the time, but I go back to the member for Scarborough Southwest and the member from Brant centre. I know how hard he's worked with respect to small business in his community. There are members in the House on all sides who work with their communities and small business to try and make sure that they are responsive and providing information to consumers and to business people alike.

The member for Etobicoke North was recently in my riding dealing with small business issues with Transportation. He was there trying to listen to the concerns brought to him in his role as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation about small business in that trucking or transportation industry and what he could do to improve their access to the economy of Ontario, and indeed North America. I would say that's important.

The member is probably waiting to speak. If the member for Carleton-Gloucester is prepared to take on the role of leading forward, then I'll stop at this time and share the time.

I gather the NDP should respond to this immediately. With that, Mr Speaker, I'll conclude my remarks.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I'm asking for unanimous consent that I would speak now and then the Liberals will speak after me and then we move to the Tories, all of us using our equal time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Martin has requested unanimous consent. Agreed.

Mr Martin: I'm really happy to once again be able to rise and speak on this red tape bill, first of all recognizing that this is a time allocation motion once again. This is the fourth time I've risen in the last four days in this House to speak on a time allocation motion, which speaks to the level of respect that this government has for the process that's in place here that allows people to

participate fully and in a wholesome way on all things that we pass that affect the citizens of each of our constituencies.

1620

We are now again, as Christmas comes upon us, being rushed into this, having to speak in a rather rapid fashion, getting as much as we can on the record so at the end of the day, when somebody comes back to say, "Where were you when this happened to us?" we can at least say that we got up, we said our piece, we challenged the government on the hurry, on the change in rules, on the continual application of time allocation, and made our concern and our disfavour known.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Not very democratic. Nevertheless, I said when I spoke on the red tape bill last week—it was time-allocated as well because it was at second reading, and now we're at third reading—that this is very much a Trojan Horse. This is not about helping the broader population of the province. This is not about making access to government easier for the ordinary constituent who lives in all of our ridings. In fact, this really isn't about small business either, because the environment that's being created in this province is as destructive to small business as it is to workers as it is to ordinary families and communities.

If this government wanted to really do something about small business, to give small business a hand up, and to help them out and to respond to some of the concerns that small businesses themselves are raising, they would bring forward a franchise act that I have tabled twice now in this House and that I propose to table again, probably next week, that creates a level playing field for the franchisee in this province as they relate to the franchisor.

People who are losing their jobs because of the economy that we're into in Ontario, people who are being moved from jobs that had some long-term viability attached to them and are being pushed out into the private sector with severance packages, are looking for someplace to invest and are buying into a franchise operation, only to find that there is no possibility or opportunity for them in that realm to actually make some money and put aside a little bit for their retirement and to pay back families who often bankroll these ventures, and that in the fact the franchisor holds all the cards.

The franchisor, in not disclosing information sometimes presents an image that is wrong. The franchisor, by way of gag orders and other rules that he puts into the contract, stops these people from getting together and speaking publicly about the things that are confronting them. At the end of the day, if they find that all is lost, they have no recourse but to go to court. They have, in a lot of cases, lost all their money and have no money left, actually, to afford the kind of legal help they need to be successful there, so they're finished before they start. If this government is interested at all in helping small business, it will move post-haste to bring in a fair franchising act that will do that.

I want to talk here today just ever so briefly about what's really going on in this province. We get a red tape bill here that pretends to do some things, pretends to make government work more fluidly and readily for people, but in fact it doesn't, because what this government has done up to this point is reduce its ability to be helpful.

Let's just look at one area that people have heard me speak about over the last number of years rather often in this place and with great passion. Let's look at what they've done to children and families and communities.

Social welfare cuts: Social assistance rates were cut by 22% in October 1995. This took food off the table for half a million children across this province.

Welfare diet: David Tsubouchi, when he was the minister, issued a welfare diet for a single person with \$90 a month total for food. That's \$3 a day. Can you imagine any of us being asked to feed our families on \$3 a day? If this was a diet for prisoners of war, it would be a war crime under the Geneva Convention.

Despite Harris's promise not to touch the disabled, the papers are full of stories about welfare cuts to single moms caring for disabled children. We all know what's happened to the ODSP in this province. We've been talking about it here for the last couple of months. It's horrendous.

Special relief to municipalities with extra-high welfare case loads was terminated, shifting the full load onto the property tax. Some \$46 million in JobLink training for young people was cut from the social service ministry's budget, and it gets worse.

The 13,000 social service agencies which depend on Community and Social Services for funding had their grants cut by 5% in October 1995, a hit of some \$44 million. This affected children's aid, child abuse services, English-as-a-second-language programs for new Canadians, job training and thousands of other services across the province. A \$2.6-million cut to the budgets of Ontario's shelters for battered women has put abused women at risk of being stalked or injured or even killed. This is what's happening in Ontario, to the folks out there in the towns and communities and cities across this province.

Eliminating counselling services for perpetrators of domestic assault saves for this government another \$1.1 million but puts women in this province at greater risk of being hurt again. Funding for the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, the women's shelters, was terminated on the first day of Wife Assault Prevention Month in 1995.

The spouse-in-the-house rule was reinstated to cut single moms off family benefits if it is alleged they are living with a man, even though the law requires a three-year residency to establish a common-law spousal relationship. Welfare workers can cut off separated women if there is deemed to be a possibility of reconciliation. A three-month wait for welfare was imposed as a penalty for quitting a job or being fired, and it's gotten worse since then. Youth welfare was restricted, throwing young

people out on to the street. Fraud snitch lines were set up to scapegoat the poor.

The family support plan: We all know the history of the family support plan. The members for Nickel Belt and Niagara Centre have been front and centre pointing out the shortfalls in that program and how they're affecting families and children across this province. Millions of dollars worth of child support payments have gone unpaid and continue to go unpaid as a result of the Tory destruction of the family support plan. I was talking to my constituency worker about an hour ago and she was telling me about half a dozen phone calls that she got today, all on the Family Responsibility Office, one woman in tears because she hasn't had a cheque in over 40 days. This government will at some point, I am sure, have to answer for some of this. Over 200 family support workers were fired, leaving the program a total shambles.

Workfare, the hallmark of this government, has turned out to be quite the joke. It has been introduced for all able-bodied welfare recipients, even single moms, raising the question of whose jobs will now be done for welfare-level wages. Anyone who refuses a workfare job is severely penalized: three months' loss of benefits for the first refusal, six months for subsequent refusals. The first workfare project started in the fall of 1996. Some municipalities have refused to participate because—surprise—there are no jobs.

Do you know what? They've passed legislation now to say that people on welfare who are caught not revealing everything that they're getting in terms of income, even a hamper from their family, could stand the chance of being cut off welfare for life—forever. Following that, they've passed a piece of legislation now that will put those people in jail if they go on the street to panhandle and they're deemed to be too aggressive. This is just a small sampling of what's happened to the people of this province.

If this government is interested in red tape, let's cut the red tape for these folks, for families, for communities and for poor people across this province, I suggest.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I am very pleased to be speaking today to a time allocation motion on this red tape bill, because as the people in Windsor are well aware, this government, on a repeated basis, wants to shut down debate on issues that are very significant to the people in my riding. This is just one more example of us not being able to get answers from a government on very significant issues, issues that affect us every day.

We've only been in the House since the end of October, a very short period of time. The government decided to take a very extended holiday in terms of when the House was going to sit at all, and when we got here we learned that the highlight of the session was going to be a squeegee bill. Now, I know that the people of Windsor West needed to hear about 200 kids in Toronto who are really concerned about squeegees. How does that affect 11 million people in Ontario? How does that bill that became the priority to call the House back affect the people of Windsor West, this being the same riding that

lost two emergency rooms under the PC government, with no reinvestment in the community before that happened, that caused lineup after lineup in my riding at the remaining two sites of emergency rooms? How can you rationalize deciding today that you're going to have a closure motion on a red tape bill because you don't have time to talk about issues that are relevant to 11 million people?

1630

Just for the interests of the people at home, this is an omnibus bill. They just threw everything and the kitchen sink into this bill, threw it all together. For example, the Forest Fires Prevention Act: The people in Windsor West don't have all that many forests. We have a lot of great trees in my riding. But people should know that they're talking about strengthening authority for the MNR, the Ministry of Natural Resources, to better fight forest fires. But what the government doesn't tell us and what we realize is that they've cut 40% of the budget. You say you're going to give them more authority to do more work, but you've taken half of their people away, for heaven's sake. How do you expect them to do their work?

The same is true for hospitals. You go on this bent of a hospital health restructuring system, throw everything including the kitchen sink into this commission, give it all the powers in the world to change the way we deliver health in Ontario, and in the same breath you cut dollar after dollar out of the budgets of our hospitals, the very groups and institutions that need to deliver service while all this change is going on, with no reinvestment in community. Then you think you're going to have a good outcome.

The Provincial Auditor told us differently, didn't he? In fact, last week Erik Peters produced his report, which he does on an annual basis. That is the Provincial Auditor's report. He highlights the most significant crises that face the Ontario government. What did he choose to highlight in this case? That the entire Health Services Restructuring Commission and its work is in crisis and in complete chaos. They acknowledge, in fact, that the formula that was used in the adjustment of hospital budgets doesn't take into account patient need. We could have told the auditor that a long time ago. We've been telling the minister that for the last four years.

Now this gang, into its fifth year of power in this government, has the full responsibility for the canary in the coal mine, being Windsor's health services and why we have lineups in our ERs. I had the great misfortune over the last several months to be walking through that emergency ward almost on a daily basis. There was not a visit that I made through that emergency room when I did not find a waiting line, when I did not find people who don't have doctors in my community and the only choice they have is to go to the emergency wards. Why? Because our riding has the dubious distinction of being the first to apply for the northern rural designation for underservice of physicians for the city of Windsor and Essex county,

the most southern urban community you're going to find in Ontario.

Does that make any sense, and why were we forced to do that? Because the Minister of Health at the time, who is most notable for comments such as, "Our pregnant women can pop across the river to have their babies," during the OB crisis of 1997—these are the kinds of things we remember from the Minister of Health. That was the old Minister of Health. He also told us that we had no right to discuss underserved designations for doctors, that we were even underserved, because we hadn't applied with an application form. So when we called and said, "OK, give us the application form," we get faxed over this form that says, "Northern rural community designation program." Boy, this makes a lot of sense for us. The truth is that the government, in particular the Ministry of Health, has been very neglectful in the collection of its own data. We have doctors who have been dead and buried for years that were still listed as serving their communities. Of course the numbers were all wrong, so the ministry couldn't say that we didn't have enough doctors. We knew, because we have people in our emergency rooms who are costing us more money than required because they don't have a family doctor. This stuff is so basic you just need to walk down Oak Avenue on the west side of Windsor, go to the door and ask them, "Do you have a doctor?" You have a huge chance that they're going to say no.

It's not just Windsor. Windsor was the first, but it was followed closely by Cambridge, and then by Kitchener-Waterloo. Who would believe all those communities in southwestern Ontario don't have enough doctors? We could have told you that in 1997, had you listened. This government is so intent on their own mission that they want to shut down debate, shut down every effort to have to give answers to the public of Ontario. This is one more example of that.

Today we're talking about time allocation. For the people of Windsor West that means closure of debate on these issues of the bills they choose to present in the House. What does that mean to us? That means more closure of debate on the things that are significant.

That same Provincial Auditor also remarked in the report last week that the ministry is no longer going to collect data for readmission rates of patients in hospitals. That same week that Minister of Health—this new one who's going to be known for all kinds of things but mostly for the complete failure of this commission and its health services restructuring process—went off to the Ontario Hospital Association and said, "Don't you worry, we're coming up with a new funding formula." Boy, cute words from this government. Every time you talk about a funding formula, it's an absolute disaster. Every school in Ontario is well aware of that. That should be enough to make us fearful of a funding formula for hospitals.

She said they are going to now fund hospitals based on efficiency. What does "efficiency" mean? Does that mean fiscal efficiency because they balance their books? Does that mean the 50% of hospitals in Ontario that

aren't in debt are considered efficient and therefore they are going to get funding under the funding formula? Does that mean the 50% of hospitals that are currently in debt in Ontario are going to be punished in how they're funded because they're in debt, like both the remaining hospitals in my community because the boards of directors of those hospitals took a very responsible decision and said, "We cannot cut these services"? Why couldn't they cut the services, even though we had the best-laid plans in terms of restructuring our health care? They could not cut services because this government did not come through in reinvesting in our community.

At the same time you closed our emergency rooms, you did not have certain beds made available in nursing homes, rehabilitative beds, chronic care beds. They were not up and running in other institutions before you shut down our emergency ward. Why were they backed up in the emergency ward? Because the patients that were going to be admitted to hospital were being admitted to beds where there were already patients that belonged in the chronic care beds, in the rehabilitative beds, in the nursing home beds, but they didn't exist in the community.

This, to me, does not sound like science. The pages who are working in the House today could go through the perfect logic of having to place those items in the community before you stop the services in a hospital. If this sounds like a broken record, it's because we've been talking about it since 1995.

I would ask every one of those researchers, the Tory staffers over there, who are supposed to provide all those briefing notes for the ministers, to put the truth in their briefing notes, to say, "Yes, we have made major errors in how we've done this." All those \$100,000 paid political staffers who work in the Premier's office: What did they get? They got a 30% increase in their salaries in this year, just since 1999. Is that because the Minister of Finance stands up yesterday and lauds this fabulous boom of the economy in Ontario? Oh, that's great because now they can take all of that bonus surplus they're finding all of a sudden and they can double the staff in the Premier's office. They can give 30% increases to all these fancy suits that are sitting behind the counter on the government side over there.

I want to go back to Oak Street in my riding and say: "Yes, we're underserved and you don't have doctors; yes, you're still waiting in emergency lineups in our hospitals; yes, they have not invested in our community, not in chronic care beds, not in rehab beds, not in nursing homes certainly and that is way behind in terms of the time schedule. But yes, the government did find money for their increase in political staff salaries; yes, they did find money to double the size of the Premier's office; yes, they found money to draw up a fancy new book that is in the hands of 2.2 million children in the school system.

It's a book that looks kind of like this. It's called *The Millennium Book*. Guess what it has in it? It has a picture of the Premier, in the hand of every child of Ontario.

That's what they found money for. That's what they were able to zoom through the system for. They found money and time to do that, but they couldn't find money and time to take care of the real needs of Ontario. That's what I'm in this House to talk about. That's why I don't want to see closure on any of these bills, time allocation or otherwise, because this government has a responsibility to every single Ontarian.

In the case of Windsor West, certainly in the case of health care, they have done wrong by us. You have failed us on every score. You have made a mockery of all the best-laid plans that very good, tireless volunteers took the time, over six and seven years, to plan the best way to deliver health care. So while the fancy suits are sitting there with their fancy fat-cat salaries and 30% increases—I hope the length of time you are forced to sit there means that you are one of the 30% increases.

1640

The truth is, what is really important in the end—it is about priorities; it's about where the government chooses to spend its money. We can see what he did with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission. All this fancy talk by the Management Board chair: "Oh, we've merged the commission. We gave them new-found responsibilities." He gave them a 35% increase in his salary; that's what he did. And you have the balance of the OPSEU workers out on strike because they're asking for—what? Some measly increase somewhere along the line.

It's about priorities. It's about what Mike Harris thinks is good for himself. We are finding example after example after example that where it's convenient for the government, for their little messaging, for their core group of supporters who keep writing the cheques to all the fund-raisers—where are all those donors today? Why, I think they're at the Cornerstone Club this afternoon. Isn't there a big meeting going on? I'm surprised there are any members on the Tory side in the House at all. Shouldn't you be lollygagging around your donors this afternoon? Isn't that where it's happening? So if you pay the modest amount of—what is it? Is it \$500 or is it \$1,000?

Interjection: It's \$500.

Mrs Papatello: For \$500 you get to have special time with the ministers. You know what for? You get to discuss policy. That's right: money into the Tory party; policy out of the Tory party. Do you see how this government works? That is why Dalton McGuinty increased his vote in the last election. That is why we are going to go door to door in every corner, in every town, in every city in Ontario for the next four years. It is proof positive today that what we said was happening over the last four years is coming home to roost now.

Suits aside, we have a message that we will bring in to this House, despite the suits, despite the advertising, despite 2.2 million books in the hand of every child in the school system that they managed to create in time before the millennium hit. But in my community they could not find the time or the money to deliver emergency care money, chronic care beds, rehab beds, nursing home

beds. Those were the priorities for us and that is what we will continue to bring in to this House.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): It's my pleasure to rise to support this motion today because it's very important that this bill get passed in an expeditious manner. I'd like to remind the House what the Red Tape Commission's definition of red tape is. It is "a procedure or paperwork not needed to achieve any identified government objective." That can be in the form of legislation, regulations, licences, permits, approvals and a number of other forms.

Cutting red tape, I would remind the House, does not compromise public health and safety or the environment. Why is cutting red tape important? It's important because it attracts jobs, investment and provides better customer service. Other jurisdictions have already learned the importance of this. We need only to look, for example, at Quebec, New York state, the United Kingdom, even the socialist government of France, to name only a few.

Cutting red tape is going to be an important competitive advantage for the future of this province. What has been accomplished to date? The previous Red Tape Commission listened and took action. In 1997, it produced a report called *Cutting the Red Tape Barriers to Jobs and Better Government*. The report contained 132 general and specific recommendations to eliminate red tape. Many of these recommendations have been implemented and reflect just plain common sense. For example, we've allowed the restocking of mini-bars in hotels and motels 24 hours a day. We've developed a user-friendly information package for employers in understanding the Pay Equity Act. We've worked with other provinces towards establishing common submission requirements for pharmaceutical and economic information. We have removed requirements for minimum room sizes in buildings except where requirements are necessary for health and safety reasons.

We continue to listen and to take action in eliminating red tape. Since 1995 this government has passed 11 red tape reduction bills. These bills have repealed 28 outdated acts and have amended another 149 others. We've eliminated over 1,300 outdated and unnecessary regulations.

The red tape bill currently before the Legislature represents another important step in our effort to eliminate red tape. This bill, like the others before it, is based on correcting problems that businesses and individuals have brought to the government's attention. For example, it will allow for the increased use of electronic technologies for companies to hold meetings by a teleconference or interactively over the Internet. This will save businesses valuable time and money and takes advantage of current technology. The bill will improve consumer protection by increasing the cooling-off period for contracts signed in consumers' homes to days from the current two days. This will help prevent consumer fraud and save consumers money and inconvenience in the future.

We're also taking action to prevent red tape before it can become a problem. The Red Tape Commission has

created a regulatory impact and competitive test to screen new legislative and regulatory proposals. This test is going to be improved and refined as the work of the commission continues. Consistent with our Blueprint commitment in the last election, we are looking at ways to improve that test and will be creating the new business impact test. It's going to be applied to all new government regulations to ensure that they are not standing in the way of new jobs or threatening existing ones.

This bill gets rid of five outdated statutes: the Stock Yards Act, the Artificial Insemination of Livestock Act, the Technology Centres Act, the Ontario Telephone Development Corporation Act, the Massey-Ferguson Limited Act, 1981. By the way, Massey-Ferguson has not been with us for over 10 years yet the statute is still on the books.

This is a good bill. The commission hopes that there will be regular red tape bills every year and that red tape bills are going to be a major asset in fighting red tape.

I would invite all members of the House to join the government in what I think is a very worthy cause, and that cause is making Ontario the best place in the world for regulatory excellence. Investors today are highly sophisticated. They understand whether or not a government understands their problems and is prepared to respond to them, and where they see a lack of understanding and a lack of response they're going to seek investment opportunities elsewhere.

This bill is an important step forward and I would urge all members to support the bill and all members to support this motion.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I am very pleased to speak on this bill because I'm a great believer in reducing as much red tape as possible in a lot of different areas that government's involved in. I think we want to make sure that the standards that we've developed in this province over the years in so many different areas, as are outlined in the different statutes that we're dealing with in this bill, are adhered to because we certainly don't want to lower standards. But I'm a great believer in the notion that people have a right to know where they stand, organizations have a right to know where they stand, with all levels of government as quickly as possible, because time delay, more often than not, costs money and the consumer ends up paying for that in the long run. But you've got to make sure the standards are maintained.

The whole notion of a red tape reduction bill is a good idea; however, this government has been championing this kind of legislation ever since it came to power in 1995. Yet I would like somebody on the government side to get up and explain the statement that the Minister of Finance made here yesterday in his economic outlook where he basically said to the people of Ontario that we are going to start our own income tax system in Ontario. I can't think of a more regressive step. Just think about it. For the last 30 or 40 years the people of Ontario have at least known that when it comes to determining what your taxable income is there's one set of rules and regulations,

and we all know that those sets of rules and regulations are like 10,000 pages thick. We may disagree with the interpretation from time to time, and there are tribunals and courts that one can go to in order to get those disputes resolved, but at least there was one constant thing in the whole situation, and that is that there was basically one Income Tax Act that applied both at the federal and provincial levels.

1650

The Minister of Finance yesterday said to the people of Ontario: "We don't like that any more because if the federal government starts to decrease taxes, the way the system is set up, we may not be given credit for that and the people of Ontario will not know whether it's a federal income tax cut or a provincial income tax cut. Therefore, we are going to set up our own income tax system." This must come as quite a surprise to the people of Ontario.

You could probably say, "What's this got to do with red tape?" I'll tell you what this has to do with red tape. Those two single paragraphs in his statement yesterday are probably going to create more red tape than has ever been created in the province, because we're going to duplicate everything. We're going to duplicate all the income tax statutes that are out there federally already and that have been applied at the provincial level. We're going to duplicate that all at the provincial level. I can't think of a worst kind of situation for the business people of Ontario and for the individual taxpayers of Ontario than to, in effect, have two separate rules apply as to what is taxable income. Let me just read to you what he said.

"The federal government has required that provincial personal income tax systems use the federal definition of taxable income. This limits our flexibility in designing tax systems to meet the specific needs of Ontario taxpayers." These are his words. "Ontario is no longer willing to accept federally imposed constraints"—I assume he means the present government, because I haven't heard a lot of people talk about this issue out there in Ontario—"constraints from an earlier era of federal dominance in federal-provincial relations.

"Ontario will move to a 'tax on income' system"—rather than a taxable income system. I'm sure the people out there are already confused: "What's this man talking about?" I would say to Mr. Eves, what are you talking about?—"in which Ontario's personal income tax will no longer be linked to federal tax and subject to hidden tax increases in the federal system. A 'tax on income' system would preserve the benefits Ontario taxpayers have gained from this government's tax cuts."

I say to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of this Legislature and to the people of Ontario, if we in this province set up an income tax system parallel to that of the federal government, businesses and individuals are going to be subjected to twice the red tape they are currently already subjected to. You will have different definitions as to what taxable income is for federal purposes and for provincial purposes, and you could just go on and on.

There already is a method by which you can deal with this kind of situation, and that is for the ministers of finance, provincially and federally, to get together and resolve some of these issues. But for goodness' sake, let us not set up another system purely for the reason that somehow this government, or whichever government may be in place here, can then take credit for whatever happens in the province. That's not what government should be all about. Government should be all about serving people, but not whether or not at the end of the day they could take credit for a particular measure.

I say to the government, yes, there may be some good measures in this bill and, yes, there were some other red tape reduction acts passed before which dealt with a lot of meaningless stuff. As you heard the member here today say, he thinks it's very meaningful that five acts that haven't really applied to our economic and social circumstances in Ontario for the last 40 or 50 years are going to be taken off the books. OK, fine. That's a step in some direction. They weren't bothering anybody anyway. Why did you need to get rid of them? But OK, we'll give you that one. That's a good idea. But you're going to undo all of that in one fell swoop by just making it more difficult for the people of Ontario to understand our already totally complicated tax system by imposing another system of taxation in the province.

We haven't even talked about the cost. We always hear this government railing against the cost of programs. I've no idea what it's going to cost to set up a new parallel income tax system, but I can imagine it's going to be quite expensive. Who is going to pay for that? The poor taxpayers of Ontario, when there's absolutely no need for it at all.

I would ask the member from Gloucester, whom I recognize to be an honourable gentleman—he's a former mayor of a municipality—to talk to the Minister of Finance and say to him, "Does this really make any sense at all?" This isn't about taking credit for something or not getting credit for something. What we should really be doing is trying to make the system as simplified as possible for the people of the province. Isn't that what the Common Sense Revolution is all about? Isn't that what all these red tape reduction bills are all about? I ask him and the other honourable members who are here—there are a couple of cabinet ministers currently in the House—to talk to the Minister of Finance, because it doesn't make any sense at all.

The other issue that I very quickly want to raise is this whole idea of, "Here we go again, another closure motion." It's interesting, we don't hear that terminology in the House any more, but at one time it was a highly unusual step for a government to actually invoke closure, to say there will be no more debate on an issue. In this House itself, we've gone from unlimited time that you can speak on a matter to 60 minutes, to 20 minutes, and now in many cases, after a certain number of hours of debate—I believe it's six or seven hours—we're going to 10-minute debate.

Nobody says that the parliamentary system is necessarily the most efficient system that we have, but let's at least make sure it's the most democratic system that we have and allow people to have their say, which is basically being shut off with this kind of closure motion.

It seems to me that just about every bill that comes to this House, the government, after a day or so of debate, maybe two days of debate—and when we say two days, we have to be careful as well, because the general public may get the idea that when you're talking about a day's debate, it's an eight-hour debate. We're usually only talking about two hours. Most of our orders of the day don't start until about 4 o'clock, and by 6 o'clock in the afternoon it's usually finished for that session. Then we go on to another two-and-a-half-hour session in the evening, usually on a completely different topic or matter. So when we talk about a sessional day on a particular bill, we're only talking about two hours or, at most, two and a half hours.

This government in the last House, and on just about every bill they've introduced so far in this House, has said: "We don't want debate. We want to cut it off. We want to invoke closure." Closure is basically the limiting of the democratic right of the members to speak as long as they want, as long as they have something meaningful to contribute on a particular bill or piece of legislation.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: They're laughing. You're talking about a bill here that is how thick? It's about 170 pages, if I recall correctly. There it is. Let's see.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's 225.

Mr Gerretsen: This is a bill of 225 pages, and most members will get, at most, about 10 minutes to speak on this bill. Then it may go to committee, like we saw happen with the squeegee bill that went to committee the other day. It went there for a couple of days, and then, as soon as the last delegation was there to make their presentation, the government invoked the rule whereby basically, within 10 minutes, everything had to be passed, and if it wasn't passed, it was deemed to have passed.

I ask the former mayor of Gloucester, is that a democratic way to run a province, to cut off debate, to not allow the opposition any opportunity to present meaningful amendments to the process, to make the decisions on all of these various laws, even before the delegations have been heard after second reading of many of these bills? It's a sham, it's an absolute sham. It is somehow allowing the people in the public of Ontario the idea that they can contribute something to the process, and in most if not all cases the government has already totally decided what it's going to do, totally decided what amendments it's going to allow, and usually the only amendments that are allowed are their own drafting errors that have to be corrected.

1700

I think you'll remember it well, Speaker; remember all those property tax bills that were passed last year. There were seven different property tax bills. Do you know why there were seven different property tax bills?

Because they got it wrong every time. Every time they had to fix something or there was something that was wrong in the last bill.

As a matter of fact, today I read with great interest in one of the clippings that most municipalities have only just recently sent out their 1999 final commercial and industrial property tax bill. And we're on December 1. It used to be that the tax bills for most municipalities went out no later than May or June at the latest, or even April.

I'd like the former mayor of Gloucester to explain. How do you explain to people the fact that a lot of these industrial and commercial property owners actually got a break last year? Their taxes were reduced. They got a bill earlier this year that basically said: "I'm sorry, we're going to have to charge you more. There has been a new bill passed by the Legislature on December 15, 1998, in which the fairness concept of market value had to be not only redefined but had to be undone because some people's taxes were simply rising too much and therefore whatever break that you think you got we'll have to claw back from you."

So I say to this government, and I know my time is limited, invoking closure on a bill of this nature is wrong. Invoking closure except in the most unusual circumstances is wrong. You're doing it, you're getting away with it, and I hope the people of Ontario will understand. Perhaps they didn't collectively get it the first time around with the Harris government, but they will have to understand this time around that we are dealing here with a bully government that basically is going to impose its way on the people of Ontario come hell or high water.

To even be talking about reducing red tape in a bill like this, when at the same time you're talking about setting up a provincial income tax system that is completely separate and apart from the federal income tax system, that will make it more confusing for the people of Ontario and for the many businesses, particularly small businesses in Ontario, is totally unacceptable. I would invite the general public to write their members, irrespective of what side of the House they're on, about this issue. It's unacceptable to have an income tax system that is different from the federal income tax system started in this province.

So I say no to closure, and I say yes to democracy and no to a province-wide new income tax system.

Ms Martel: I was thinking back about how many days we have sat in this session, and so far there have been 20 calendar days. The government has had us sit at night, so there have probably been 30 sessional days. I suspect at least five of those 20 calendar days, if you look back, would have been taken up with the throne speech debate. So no business of the Legislature was done, no pieces of legislation were dealt with. I suspect of the 15 that would be left, three at least were opposition days, so we're working our way down. Now I look back and reflect that this is the third time that I have been in this House for a closure motion by this government in this session. So we are probably down to about 12 calendar days where we have actually sat and done some legislation here in this

place, and we are now on the fourth closure motion for legislation. That says something about how concerned, or how unconcerned, this government is with the democratic process.

I don't care if they don't particularly like my point of view or the point of view that's being expressed by members of the New Democratic Party, and I don't particularly care if the government doesn't like the point of view being expressed by members of the Liberal Party. But what the government fails to recognize, and it becomes clearer as we look at the short number of hours for debate and the repeated use of closure motions, is that the government shows disdain for the people we in the opposition have the honour of representing. We are elected here too, whether the government likes it or not, and enough people in the ridings we represent liked our point of view, liked what we had to say and were encouraged by the direction that we put out for people in our party platforms during the election. So we represent not an insignificant number of voters in this province too, who liked and wanted a perspective that was different than the Conservatives.

It shows complete contempt, disdain, for all those people when the government uses its majority, as it is wont to do, as it has surely done in the few calendar days that we have sat so far this fall, solely to shut down debate because they don't like to hear what the opposition has to say. That's what's happening here again today. I am offended by this process. I am offended by a government that shows such contempt and disdain for the people we have been elected to serve, and I am offended that in the small amount of time that we have sat this fall—because the government brought this House back at least three, if not four, weeks later than if we had followed the calendar—20 calendar days, and probably only 12 of those actually used for legislation, we are now on our fourth closure motion to shut down legitimate debate.

It's not just a matter of having a closure motion so that we would move directly to third reading. I want to spend just a moment reminding people about what the motion says today, because in fact it is a motion to shut down debate at committee as well.

This bill passed on second reading, even though members of the opposition voted against it. But what we did do, as is our right under the standing orders that still exist in this place, was to stand, eight members, so that we could have this red tape bill sent to a committee of this Legislature. We still have a right to do that. I suspect if the government had its way, that right would be taken too. But for the moment we still have that right, and we legitimately stood our eight members here last week, or it might have been at the beginning of this week, whenever the vote on second reading was taken, and we asked for this bill to be sent to committee.

Why did we do that? We did that because this is a bill that is 225 pages long, that has schedules that affect virtually every ministry in this government, that has changes to any number of pieces of legislation that many people would have an interest in, and because the time

allocated to us for debate was already severely restricted. So we wanted the bill to go to committee so that we could have at least some form of a public hearing—public airing—of what appears in these schedules so that people would have an idea of what the government is or is not doing or is mistakenly doing, as I will get to later on.

What did the House leader do? He got in a little snit about us having the audacity to stand up and use eight members to send this to committee. He gets into a little snit, and instead of allowing the committee to sit, as it should, for some hearings next week, the government is using the motion before us today to ensure that the committee will never sit next week. There will never be one single presenter who can come and have their say on anything in this bill. There will be not one single moment of debate by members in that committee about the principles of the bill, about what amendments should be made, about what changes should be made, about what mistakes the government is making.

The House leader, because he was mad, because he didn't have his way, came here today with a resolution that says the general government committee will sit next Monday at 6:45 pm, and from the moment they start to sit the Chair will put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without any further debate, without any amendments. That shows contempt and disdain again for the people we have the honour and privilege of coming here to represent. The people, I remind the government, wanted a different point of view than theirs when we were elected.

1710

So the committee will sit only because we had the audacity to stand eight members, and the moment it starts, the Chair—I don't know who the Chair is and I don't really care; it doesn't matter—will then be forced, by virtue of this motion, to put every question to dispose of the bill. There will be no debate, no one coming to talk about it, no opportunity for public input.

I guess part of the reason the House leader did this was not only because he was mad because we had the audacity to stand up and actually force it to committee, but because the government got beat up badly in the justice committee this week with respect to its squeegee kids bill—badly. I wasn't there. I only saw on TV some of the folks who came, some of the folks who will be directly affected when the police want to take the human garbage off the street and throw them in jail.

I understand that of the 12 people who made representations that day on this government's squeegee kids bill, only two were supportive of the government position. The government got beat up badly this week in the justice committee, when they could only find two presenters to come in and prop up what is a really lousy piece of legislation, mean-spirited, because all it does is attack the poorest of the poor. That's all it does: Get them off the street so the tourists don't have to see them when they come to Toronto.

The government doesn't want any more public hearings. It doesn't want to run the risk again that they will have a committee hearing in this place—or maybe, if we get very lucky, in some other community in Ontario—and people will come and they will not support the government point of view; they will oppose it. They'll oppose it vociferously, as they did in some cases in that committee on Monday.

I think that's also what's behind the reason that today we are dealing with a resolution that shows such contempt and disdain for people who voted for us as opposition members and for the democratic process in this province as a whole.

I regret that because clearly, as the government uses its majority today to ram through this motion, the government will use more motions like this to make sure that even if we do have the audacity again to stand eight members and try to send a bill to committee for some kind of public input and some kind of public hearings, this is the kind of resolution we're going to get: a slap in the face, because we decided to get up and try to do something about a bill we disagree with.

I have no doubt that we'll see more of the same and that what you will see happening is very few committees sitting in this place any more, because the government doesn't want to be bothered with public input, because the government doesn't want to hear from the any opposition from the public or get beat up in the same way they got beat up on Monday in the justice committee. I think that is a bad way to do business. It really shows contempt for all the voters in this province who had a different point of view when they voted for the opposition members on this side. I think it's a bad process in terms of what we're doing to the democratic process that we're supposed to operate under when we come to this place.

I suppose there are some reasons the government really doesn't want to hear from the public with respect to this bill. I think part of the reason is that if people really had an opportunity to look at it, they would be concerned about a number of pieces of it. If people had any kind of opportunity to get through the 225 pages, they might very well want to come and express their concerns.

Even if you go to the government Web site, which is supposed to give the public some information about the bill, there are errors about what this bill does or doesn't contain. That's just on the Web site. Imagine if you had a chance to carefully go through, section by section, all of the schedules for the various ministries to see what the net effect of the changes is.

Let me give you an example. I raised this when I spoke on this bill on second reading last Thursday. It's so effective as a red tape bill that the government doesn't know what's on it; that's clear when you take a look at the Web site. Now, maybe the Web site has been corrected since I spoke about the mistakes that were on it last week. But up until last week, and I haven't had the chance to check recently, the backgrounder said clearly, "The Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999, if passed, will

repeal the Oleomargarine Act, the Abandoned Orchards Act, the Fur Farm Act and the Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act."

The fact of the matter is, if you take a look at the schedules and take a look at the bill, none of these pieces of legislation, none of these changes is in the bill. They don't appear anywhere. The truth is that there is no Policy and Priorities Board of Cabinet Act. It was in fact repealed by this government last December 1998. It's not a part of this any more, even though it still appears on the Web site as being part of this bill.

If the government can't figure out what's not in the bill, how do you expect Ontarians to figure that out? Or do you care? Or is that the reason why we had such a short debate on second reading and why the government effectively is going to guarantee that there are no public hearings on this bill next Monday?

Just very briefly in terms of some of the things that the bill contains: The bill contains a whole schedule under the Ministry of Natural Resources, probably four or five pieces of legislation that will change. One that would probably not have a great deal of interest to most people here today is called the Fish Inspection Act. It will allow an inspector to "arrest without warrant a person that he or she believes on reasonable grounds is committing, has committed or is preparing to commit an offence under subsection (1)." It is important because it has everything to do with how we manage our resources in this province: fish, wildlife, aggregate, forestry resources. So I approve of the changes that are going to be made to allow a conservation officer under the Ministry of Natural Resources to take some immediate steps to conserve the fish resource in the province.

But what the government doesn't tell people and what must be stated here is that the likelihood of a conservation officer being able to give effect to this section is completely unlikely. Under this government, the Ministry of Natural Resources has seen a cut in its staff of almost half, of almost 50%. The people who we hope are out there protecting resources that belong to all of us—fish, game, aggregate, forestry—aren't there any more. They aren't there any more because they're replacing the other staff at desk jobs who have now lost their jobs under this government.

It's worth going back to an audit that the Provincial Auditor made public last year in his annual report when he looked at the fish and wildlife branch of the Ministry of Natural Resources. He talked about conservation officers in particular, and those are the people who I am sure this schedule speaks to. He made it very clear that although the government had a number of badges that were attached to the Ministry of Natural Resources, a number of badges for conservation officers—and they use that figure publicly and continue to say that the number of badges of conservation officers has never been reduced—the fact of the matter is that probably a quarter of those badges were not in use. There were no live bodies using those badges out protecting the resources in the province. They were people who were sitting at desk jobs

because they were replacing people who had been fired, and they weren't out dealing with all of those important issues that should be dealt with, and that should be dealt with as a result of the change in this act.

He also said that because of cuts to the same Ministry of Natural Resources, even in MNR districts where there were conservation officers, by the end of the calendar year—which is not the end of the fiscal year, so another three months to go—many of those same districts were not in a position to do any enforcement whatsoever with respect to fish and game, aggregate or forestry, because their budgets had run out. They didn't even have money for gas to patrol their conservation area.

We saw that happen again last spring, early in January, in northwestern Ontario, Red Lake district—out of money completely. They had staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources on CBC talking about what they were going to try and do about that, but the fact is they had no money left to patrol.

So you look at a change like this, which you might like to agree with, and you know that there is absolutely no way under the sun that the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to be able to do anything to give effect to this change.

1720

I look at the changes that are made under the Attorney General with respect to finally making a change at the lottery corporation to allow the lottery corporation to take the winnings if the person who won was someone who was in arrears with the Family Responsibility Office. This was a change that this House adopted over three years ago, in the fall of 1996, when the government brought in Bill 82. That was one of the 10 changes that the government talked about making then in order to increase the enforcement tools, in order to be able to get money back from people who owed to recipients, to women and children, predominantly. Here we are three years later, finally, in one of the schedules in this bill, giving effect to an enforcement tool that the government has publicly said has been in place, that the government publicly said was passed. It was passed, but I guess one of the changes that had to be made, one of the minor amendments that the government forgot about three years ago, is only now finally being made.

Contrast that, the change that's happening now, three years later, with what the auditor just said in his report that was released about a month ago, and that is that the enforcement tools at the disposal of staff at the Family Responsibility Office are not being used, except in rare and exceptional circumstances; that the suspension of drivers licenses or the garnishments of bank accounts or the suspending of a passport were only being used in the rarest of circumstances to try and collect money owed from payers who don't want to pay.

You would think the government would have used this Red Tape bill in a manner to put into effect some serious enforcement tools that might be used by staff at the FRO to try and reclaim money that is owed to predominantly women and children right across this province. It was

quite a condemnation of what is happening under this Attorney General's watch at the Family Responsibility Office. In fact, the auditor said that in 75% of the cases registered at the FRO now, there are arrears, there is money owing to families—75% of the cases on file. And under this government's watch, the amount of arrears owing, the amount of money that payers owe families out there has now risen to \$1.2 billion—almost doubled under this government.

Clearly, the enforcement tools aren't working. I think that speaks volumes to the cuts that the former Attorney General made in 1996 when he closed the regional offices, laid off 290 staff overnight and tried to centralize in an office at Downsview that wasn't up and running and still isn't running well.

The auditor also made a comment that the computer system that the FRO paid some \$2.3 million for still isn't working properly, still goes down on a regular basis, still is not able to get, by virtue of the fact of making inquiries to staff, payers and recipients the information they need.

So here we are three years later, the government finally making an amendment that would put into effect something we thought we passed three years ago and at the same time we have an overwhelming, serious, continuing problem at the Family Responsibility Office that this government seems to have no interest whatsoever in trying to address.

If the government wanted to get serious about red tape, I could make two suggestions. Before I do that, I think it's also important to note that in the bill itself, as you go through it and you look at the schedules, you'll see that in at least 17 different sections we have changes being made to correct errors in previous pieces of legislation. Some 17 different subsections are here only to correct errors in other bills. I think that speaks volumes as to the reason why we shouldn't be using omnibus bills to try and pass so much legislation, because inevitably, invariably, we have all kinds of mistakes being made because the government is in such of a heck of a hurry to get it done, to get it passed and to not have any public input or public look at what's going on.

If the government wanted to be serious about red tape, there are two things I would bring to their attention in the time remaining. This goes back to the auditor's report as well, that was released about a month ago: The auditor did a review of the Ontario substance abuse branch, which is the branch of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care that deals primarily with all those thousands and thousands of community agencies that provide drug and alcohol treatment programs to Ontarians. The auditor made it clear that the accountability framework between the government and those agencies was sadly lacking.

Part of the reason there was a problem in terms of money being flowed, how it was being flowed, was it being used, was there some kind of positive result coming back, was that the bureau itself has to sign a service agreement with all those many community agencies. It's interesting that a draft service agreement was developed by the bureau in late 1996, but it could not be finalized

until approved by the Red Tape Commission. We had one of the members of the Red Tape Commission talking earlier this afternoon—I believe he was a member of the Red Tape Commission; he certainly made reference to it. The bureau submitted the draft agreement to the Red Tape Commission in early 1997. At the time of our audit, which was in the fall of 1998, the bureau was still waiting for a response from the Red Tape Commission. Accordingly, no agreements were in place and as the auditor told the committee a couple of weeks ago, still no agreements are in place, because nothing has been done with respect to work submitted to the Red Tape Commission at least two years ago. So maybe the government and the Red Tape Commission should take another look at that to ensure that the draft agreements become approved and finalized and can be used by the bureau and the thousands of agencies that it funds.

I'll look at a second bit of business that was just recently introduced in this House. Now we have a situation where a government member, who I assume supports the government trying to get rid of red tape, put forward a bill that will dramatically increase the red tape that people will have to deal with, people who are doing some of the most important work in our communities, meeting a need that governments don't seem to want to meet. Now, if this bill is ever passed, he would put an obligation and a responsibility onto them which would exceed anyone's belief about how incredibly stupid the red tape itself would be. It's the private member's bill that has been put forward by Mr Spina: An Act to ensure that food banks account for donations. I won't spend a lot of time talking about how nasty and mean-spirited and disgusting the point of the bill is, because it really is. I've had a chance to review it and I've had a chance to forward it to a number of our food banks in our communities to get their reaction. They are as offended by it as I am. If the government members were smart they would get away from this thing as fast as they possibly could.

Setting aside what the bill does—which is essentially to assume that any staff person who works in a food bank is a criminal who wants to sell food on the side—setting aside what appears to be what he's trying to get at, the fact of the bill is that the member now wants to say that larger food banks would have to be incorporated as a corporation without share capital. So now larger food banks, that by and large are spending their time responding to the needs of the poor and the hungry in our community, be they seniors, be they people who live in our poorer neighbourhoods, by they students—because at Laurentian University in Sudbury right now we have two food banks in place to help feed the students—now he wants larger food banks to get incorporated under the Corporations Act.

We called the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations and asked what volunteers at a food bank would have to do to meet the requirements of this act, if this bill is passed. The ministry sends us this information: "There are two ways to apply for letters patent to incorporate a charity in Ontario. You can apply directly to the

companies branch of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, or you can apply through the public guardian and trustee using objects specifically drafted for your charity."

You have to do the following to qualify as a charitable not-for-profit organization, which is what the bill will force larger food banks to do if it's passed: You have to provide the name and must indicate the charitable purposes of the corporation, the object or purposes of the corporation, the special provisions that must be included in the application for incorporation. You have to go through a search and you have to pay for a search to make sure your name is not a name that's being used by anyone else. You can look in the Yellow Pages to have this search done and you have to complete a particular form to do that. I don't know what the fee is for the search. I do know the other fees that are involved.

1730

You can do two things. The public guardian and trustee has what they call pre-approved object clauses. They have set them up for a number of institutions that would have similar interests that would become a charity: religious institutions, health institutions etc. I looked carefully through it. I didn't see anything that would relate, as a matter of fact, to a food bank. So it seems to me they now have to go through two processes. They have to get approval from the public guardian and trustee that they are a charitable organization and have their charitable clauses approved, and they pay a fee of \$150 for that. Then the public guardian and trustee will send that application, if approved, after the \$150 fee is paid, to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. The ministry will then go through the documents you've provided, one from the public guardian, the name search, letters patent etc, and you have the privilege of paying another \$155 for the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations to do their song and dance to allow you to be incorporated.

You've got to deal with two ministries. You've got to pay two sets of fees, one \$155, the other \$150. You've got to set out what all your objectives are. You have to pay, I assume, to do the name search, and I don't know what that fee is but let's just say \$50. By the time we're finished, volunteers who are filling a serious need in our community are going to have to pay a whack of money to comply with this stupid bill, and then they've got to do a whole bunch of work, a whole bunch of bureaucratic red tape they have to cut through, just so they can continue to have the privilege of trying to feed the poor and serve those in our communities.

I said earlier that I think the whole purpose of it is disgusting, but the bureaucratic red tape that a member of the government who supposedly is concerned about red tape wants these volunteers to go through is ridiculous. I say to the government members, if you care anything about red tape, get away from this bill as far and as fast as you can. It is a bill that should never see the light of day, and hopefully it won't.

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): I appreciate having an opportunity to speak on this issue, although I certainly don't have the eloquence or the oratorical skills of my colleague from Durham—that is certainly a hard act to follow—or of some of the members opposite. Of course the content is a little bit lacking from the members opposite.

The people of Ontario know this government is committed to eliminating red tape to open up our provincial economy. When Mike Harris and part of the team went around Ontario prior to 1995, this was one of the things they heard from residents of Ontario: red tape. In my former life as a municipal politician—those who were in municipal politics before they arrived here would recognize that one of the most aggravating, infuriating parts of local governance was the red tape that prevented people from doing things. Similarly at the provincial level.

We recognize that tying business people up in needless administrative knots serves nobody's interest and actually hinders business start-ups, job creation and new investment, not to mention the wear and tear and the increase in the stress level of the individual trying to get something done.

When we were elected in 1995, and when we were re-elected earlier this year, there were certainly no surprised faces when we moved quickly to eliminate the unnecessary paperwork and the needless bureaucratic requirements and burdens facing business people and consumers.

In 1995, very shortly after coming to office, this government established the Red Tape Commission to remove red tape and remove the barriers to job creation, economic growth and better government. The commission was co-chaired by my colleague the member for London West, Bob Wood, and by Mr Frank Sheehan, a former member of this place in the last government.

One of the commission's first tasks was to provide a useful definition for the term "red tape." I suppose everybody has a unique definition of red tape. For these purposes, it refers to any government measure that negatively affects Ontario's economic competitiveness by adding unnecessary requirements, costs or delays to normal activities of business and institutions.

Red tape is not just legislation and regulations. It comes in many different forms and includes licences, permits, approvals, standards and registration requirements. It can also include filing and certification requirements, guidelines, paperwork, enforcement practices. Some of the never-ending irritants, of course, are voice mail, the inability to reach a human being at the other end of the telephone, unanswered letters, and attitude.

It is important to recognize that red tape does not include measures that directly protect public health and safety and environmental quality. They are legitimate instances of government's responsibility to protect the public interest.

I should add that the commission has worked with all ministries and agencies as part of the government-wide effort to improve customer service. Our perseverance is

paying off with steady improvements in both attitude and performance of customer service. There is a growing understanding in the public service that how we treat customers has a direct impact on Ontario's economic well-being. When we provide timely and efficient information and services, Ontarians are more able to get on with their lives in starting businesses, working, investing, studying, acquiring new job skills and taking care of their families and giving back to our communities.

Interestingly enough, a study of 500 Ontario businesses, undertaken for the commission, found that regulatory burdens accounted for an average of 7% of a company's operating costs. You can well understand the impact on business today when the profit margin, the bottom line, has shrunk considerably. Part of this government's goal is to increase that economic return to those investors in Ontario.

It was also found that 71% of companies surveyed said they'd be more likely to invest in a province if red tape were reduced. We have taken concrete action—

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: Would the member agree that setting up a provincial income tax system would in effect increase the red tape in this province?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): It's not a point of order. Member for Carleton-Gloucester.

Mr Coburn: We have taken concrete action in this direction and, like many other areas, this government has listened. We have listened to the comments of regular Ontarians who are trying to get on with their lives, increase their lot in life and get a return on their investment.

The Red Tape Reduction Act constitutes this government's third legislative initiative to cut down on red tape. Already we have made some striking accomplishments. Just to cite a few examples, the commission has assisted with the passage of 11 red tape reduction bills that repealed 28 acts and amended 149 others. We have revoked more than 1,300 redundant or outdated regulations. In other areas, it used to take some six weeks to register a new business. That time now has been cut down to an average of 20 minutes. We have eliminated more than 1,000 licences, permits and reports required in the farm and food processing business. We have helped the hospitality industry improve cash flow by allowing bars and restaurants to use credit cards for liquor purchases. We have met with industry groups and made 130 recommendations for cuts in red tape to stimulate business activity and encourage job creation. As well, we developed a test designed to ensure that new legislation and regulations don't add new layers of red tape. A permanent red tape watchdog will be set up with an expanded mandate that will include subjecting all new regulations to a strict business impact test.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I'd like to talk a little bit about what my own ministry has accomplished to get rid of red tape. At the time this government took office in 1995, getting through the planning approval process took too

long and cost too much. Actually the planning approval process was a real aging process in this province. Planners had to wade through more than 600 pages of provincial guidelines. A simple official plan amendment could easily take 405 days.

1740

We were determined to change that. We wanted to offer a system that was less bureaucratic, that people could understand and that delivered an answer more quickly. We have addressed all these issues and our new planning system has been very successful. The new Planning Act has greatly improved the efficiency of the approval process. Official plans that used to average about two years to be processed can now be approved in as little as three months.

Back in 1995 it took an average of 1,000 days—almost three years out of your life—trying to approve plans for a subdivision. This year it averaged 190 days. It used to take about 400 days to process an official plan amendment, and that now averages 106 days. Consents have gone from nine months to three and a half.

We have delegated more decision-making down to the local level, into the hands closest to the people. As a result of these improvements, the ministry's planning approval activities have been reduced by more than 75%. Through our one-window approval process, nearly 60% of all decisions have been made within our ministry, without the need to consult any of the other seven ministries with a stake in land use planning.

We are very pleased with the success of our reforms, and our ministry continues to work with municipalities, planning boards, the public and all proponents to make sure Ontario's land use planning system works for all Ontarians in the best possible way.

We have also made changes to allow for a streamlined process for restructuring local governments. Through the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1996, the province amended the Municipal Act to give municipalities more flexibility to build local restructuring solutions. Quite recently, with the special advisers' reports in, there will be additional savings in the very near future for other areas of this province.

The Red Tape Reduction Act currently before us for second reading builds on the successes this government has already achieved. As the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations told the Legislature earlier this month, this bill continues the government's fight against unnecessary rules and regulations that impede business activity and good public service.

This government has already made great strides in cutting red tape, but much work remains to be done. By one estimate, government bureaucracy still imposes 40,000 official forms. Some 40% of small business owners say they spend more than six hours a week on government paperwork. That explains the necessity of moving forward with the Red Tape Reduction Act that is before us.

This certainly will improve the process in a number of areas for businesses in this province.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Le projet de loi déposé par le gouvernement a pour but, si je comprends bien, de réduire les formalités administratives et améliorer le service à la clientèle. Mais pour qui ? Cette loi vise à réduire les formalités administratives pour le gouvernement peut-être, mais non pour le citoyen ou la citoyenne.

In fact this omnibus act touches on several areas, including proposing amendments to the Ambulance Act. It even sets out the conditions that will complete the downloading of ambulance services to municipalities. But this government also intends to introduce legislation for the restructuring of certain urban areas such as Ottawa-Carleton municipalities. So if ambulance services are downloaded to municipalities, exactly what body will be responsible for the provision of those services in Ottawa-Carleton? How will this government ensure the provision of quality of services to the citizens in Ottawa-Carleton when the municipal government is in the midst of being restructured? We know, of course, that it is the taxpayers who will suffer from any disruption in the provision of this service.

Nous savons tous que la population de la province vieillit. Dans Ottawa-Vanier, j'ai une population importante de personnes âgées. Une population vieillissante, vous le savez tous, dépend de plus en plus sur le système de santé. Ce système doit donc s'adapter à une augmentation certaine des besoins. Les services ambulanciers font partie de ce système de santé, et le gouvernement propose dans ce projet de loi de gérer ces services, qui seront offerts par tierces parties, par le biais d'un règlement.

Regulations will take time to put in place. People are at risk during the upheaval that will be caused by the downloading of these services. This bill isn't about reducing red tape at all. It is about a government ministry abdicating its responsibilities when it comes to the provision of emergency services to vulnerable Ontarians.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I heard reference made to municipal restructuring and saw some of the members who have been up. I've been waiting for questions from the other side, as you probably have as well.

My good friend Toni Skarica I thought would be allowed on the docket today to ask a question on municipal restructuring in Hamilton-Wentworth, and my friend Brad Clark. Mr Coburn, the former mayor of Gloucester, I thought would be speaking on that today, and the Minister of Community and Social Services, because it's such an interesting topic, I must say.

My friend from Fort Erie and Port Colborne, my friend from Fort Erie, Mr Hudak, the minister, I know will be standing shoulder to shoulder with me to save municipalities such as Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Wainfleet, West Lincoln and Lincoln, the heart of rural and small-town Ontario. He, I know, will be working with me in Niagara to preserve those individual municipalities and not allow them to be gobbled up by one huge region which would be imposed from here in Toronto. I'm

really encouraged by the fact that there is a member who came from one of those municipalities and knows what it's like to see them trampled on. He will be fighting in the cabinet, I know, against this, as will my friend Mr Maves from Niagara Falls, because he has Niagara-on-the-Lake in his community. His mayor doesn't want to see one big region either.

So we're not so worried in the Niagara region, despite what the St Catharines Standard says, and you know who owns that, ultimately.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Conrad Black?

Mr Bradley: Conrad Black. The member for Etobicoke North wanted me to mention Conrad Black. That's who owns the Standard. They're pushing this, because what can happen is they can then eliminate all the other newspapers in the Niagara region and just have the Niagara Standard. We won't have a nice Port Colborne paper or a Fort Erie paper or a West Lincoln paper or a Lincoln paper. They'll be wiped out by the huge conglomerate which is the Conrad Black empire in our area.

Here is something interesting that the government members should notice. I have now calculated—I'm more updated than my friend from Kingston and the Islands—698 tax increases under this government. You say: "Well, I don't remember seeing those in the budget. How could there be?"

I remember that when Mike Harris was in opposition, and I believed him then, he said, "A fee increase, a user fee, is a tax." So every time I see a tax increase or a new user fee, as this bill calls for the possibility of new user fees, I calculate that as a new tax. I'm up to 698. There are probably far more. The member from Scarborough had a sheet in the committee this morning that the government had given him about some detailed matters. You were there at the committee, Mr Speaker. I hope he can help us out and provide for this House how many increases there have been. I've only reached 698; Mr Newman will know there are more. He had some excellent research this morning; I know he'll help us out.

People are concerned about the changes to the Day Nurseries Act to give municipalities, reflecting their downloaded administrative responsibilities for child care—that's why those changes are there. They've downloaded to those municipalities.

This afternoon many of the firefighters were here. The member for Niagara Centre, who was in the House this afternoon, asked for the unanimous consent of this House to pay tribute to them. He wanted to cut through the red tape. He ran into red tape. He wanted to pay tribute to the firefighters who were here today, who put their lives on the line when they go out to fight fires and carry out other activities under the jurisdiction of their responsibilities. He asked for unanimous consent this afternoon.

The Liberals said, "Sure, let's have unanimous consent to pay tribute to our firefighters," the NDP agreed with it, and there were voices from the government side which denied the opportunity to pay tribute to these public servants who serve us only so well. They've come to speak to us today about many of their issues, and I must say their positions on those issues were very supportable.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 46, I am required to put the question at this time.

Mr Runciman has moved government notice of motion number 14.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1803.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Quellette, Jerry J.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wilson, Jim
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Colle, Mike	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being after 6 of the clock, I declare the House adjourned until 6:45 of the clock this evening.

The House adjourned at 1806.

Evening sitting reported in volume B.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 1 December 1999

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

City of Toronto	
Mr Ruprecht	979
Firefighters	
Mr Newman	979
Oak Ridges moraine	
Mr Colle	979
Canada health and social transfer	
Mr Arnott	980
Special education	
Mr Crozier	980
Minister's comments	
Ms Churley	980
Victim assistance program	
Mr Murdoch	981
Child poverty	
Mr Patten	981
Women's Institutes	
Mr Dunlop	981

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on justice and social policy	
Mr Tascona	981
Report adopted	982

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Justice ministers' meeting	
Mr Harris	982
Mr McGuinty	983
Mr Hampton	984

DEFERRED VOTES

More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act, 1999,	
Bill 14, <i>Mr Eves</i>	
Agreed to	988

ORAL QUESTIONS

Fire in Hamilton	
Mr McGuinty	988
Mr Harris	988
Mr Clement	989
Mr Levac	989

Special education

Mr McGuinty	989
Mrs Ecker	989, 994
Mr Kennedy	992
Mr Harris	992
Mr Caplan	993
Mrs McLeod	994

Child poverty

Mr Hampton	990
Mr Harris	990, 997
Mr Patten	997

Cancer treatment

Ms Lankin	991
Mrs Witmer	991

Doctor shortage

Mr Barrett	992
Mr Hudak	993

Assistance to farmers

Mr Dunlop	994
Mr Hardeman	994

Toronto council

Mr Hampton	995
Mr Harris	995

Firefighters

Mrs Pupatello	995
Mr Stockwell	995

Trucking industry

Mr O'Toole	996
Mr Turnbull	996

Workfare

Mr Newman	997
Mr Baird	998

PETITIONS

Firefighters

Mr Bartolucci	998
---------------------	-----

Occupational health and safety

Mr Christopherson	998
-------------------------	-----

Abortion

Mr Beaubien	998
-------------------	-----

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Time allocation, government notice of motion number 14, <i>Mr Runciman</i>	
Mr Runciman	999
Mr O'Toole	999
Mr Martin	1002
Mrs Pupatello	1003
Mr Wood	1006
Mr Gerretsen	1006
Ms Martel	1009
Mr Coburn	1013
Mrs Boyer	1014
Mr Bradley	1015
Agreed to	1016

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitor

The Speaker	984, 987
-------------------	----------

Speaker's rulings

Ms Churley	984
The Speaker	985

World AIDS Day

Mr Smitherman	985
Ms Lankin	986
Mrs Witmer	987

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 1999

VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Loi de 1999 réduisant de nouveau les impôts pour stimuler l'emploi, la croissance et la prospérité,	
projet de loi 14, <i>M. Eves</i>	
Adoptée	988

MOTIONS ÉMANANT DU GOUVERNEMENT

Attribution de temps, avis de motion	
numéro 14 émanant du gouvernement, <i>M. Runciman</i>	
M ^{me} Boyer	1014
Adoptée	1016



10-11-1999
10-11-1999

No. 21B

N° 21B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 1 December 1999

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-325-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-325-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 1 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 1999

The House met at 1848.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

HEURES DE SÉANCE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 30, 1999, on the motion by Mr Klees that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 23, 1999, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until Monday, April 3, 2000.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I am asking for unanimous consent, and I believe my House leader talked to the other two House leaders before we adjourned at 6, to continue in our rotation as our member who was speaking will not be back. I believe we have about 18 minutes left.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? Agreed. So be it.

Ms Martel: Thank you, Mr Speaker, and the other members.

In the time I have this evening, knowing that we are dealing with the House calendar and knowing that this Legislature at any time could deal with virtually any issue, I think it's going to be pretty freewheeling tonight in terms of what we debate. I decided that in the time I have that I would like to address a document that I think of all of us as MPPs received in November about an issue that involves violence against women and children, particularly abuse against women and children.

It is not a topic that would get wide coverage in the media. It's not very sexy, it certainly isn't very appealing and it probably wouldn't get a lot of air time otherwise. But I'd like to make some reference to this report that we all received. It speaks volumes about what still must be done in Ontario to deal with abused women and children, and it speaks volumes to the needs that are still out there today, yet again today, when it comes to dealing with abused women and children in this province.

The document we all received was called Ten Years from Montreal: Still Working for Change. It was put out at the beginning of November for the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. Members who have been here before would know that OAITH, for short, every November at the start of Wife Assault

Prevention Month holds a press conference in which they release to the media, members of the public and MPPs information that they have gathered over the last year with respect to the level of violence against women and children, with respect to the cuts the government might have made, with respect to the changes the government might be making to the criminal justice system or to the community-based system designed to meet women's needs. They also call on the government to do certain things, and that has been a tradition.

When I was first elected here, there used to be quite a large lobby that occurred with members of OAITH. They would come to Toronto from all parts of the province, because they represent over 65 shelters in the province, and they would speak directly to all three political parties. Regrettably, for reasons I will not get into, that kind of lobby effort has not gone on for a number of years, but OAITH still takes the time to hold a press conference and to make MPPs aware of what they have documented. I certainly appreciated that they did it again this year, and I want to use a lot of the documentation that they have provided in the remarks that I'd like to make right now.

The situation continues to be desperate in Ontario with respect to abused women and abused children. Since the release of the recommendations from the May-Iles inquest, and that occurred in July 1998, there have been yet another 33 women murdered in Ontario, almost all by partners, by former partners, by people with whom they had had an intimate relationship. In 1997-98, almost 28,000 women and children were admitted to 116 women's shelters in Ontario, and that represents almost one third of all women who took refuge in shelters in Canada in the last year. Many more women and children were receiving outreach, were receiving follow-up services, crisis intervention through telephone counselling, supportive group counselling, legal support, ex-resident support and advocacy.

A survey that they did of their member shelters, the 63 in 1998, showed that a number of shelters, between 32 and 36, provided crisis telephone support to over 61,000 calls and brought outreach services to over 12,000 women and children. In November 1998, OAITH told us that the requests for services and shelters had increased from 11% in 1994-95 to 33% in 1997-98, fully one third of the female population.

It is also true that many of those women who sought support at women's services in the community were not likely to go to the police to report on their abuser or to try and get this matter into court. The survey shows that only

24% of women in Ontario shelters had ever contacted the police about their abuser; in only 58% of those cases were charges ever laid. Over 75% of women using shelters are addressing the abuse by using counselling support and women's advocacy services. Only a quarter of them want to be involved or get involved with the police.

I raise that point because, if only a quarter of women will involve themselves with the police to deal with abusive situations, surely that determines how we will structure our response to woman and child abuse. Surely that gives an indication to government of where resources should be placed in order to deal most effectively with women who are abused. Surely that says very clearly and sends a clear signal that 75% of women won't contact the police, won't enter the criminal justice system, so the support that we have to provide has to come from community-based women's services. That's where the focus has to be, and that's what I'll address further in my remarks. But those are clearly the statistics: women seeking help in shelters has grown 30% to 33% in the last year, from 11% in 1994-95.

The government response needs to be talked about. The government response to community-based programs has been to cut many of them. We know that those are the services women use to deal with abusive situations. It's clear that, immediately after the June election, women's shelters, community counselling programs for women and children experiencing violence, second-stage housing programs and the referral services all had cuts. In fact, counselling at second-stage housing was cut completely—\$2.6 million. We now know that in many of those second-stage housing programs the majority could not continue to provide counselling even free, and that five second-stage housing projects have closed.

We also know that in 1997 the government announced some funding for front-line services for abused women and children, and OAITH makes it clear that most of those have been short-term, one-time projects for research, workshops or educational materials. In total, they make it clear that, after eliminating approximately \$9 million from front-line services for abused women and children, the 1997 allocation of \$7 million over four years did not match what had been cut, and in fact there has been a net loss of ongoing funding for community-based programs for women and children who are trying to escape violence.

We also know that the government has, to its credit, made changes on the criminal justice side. The problem is that when only a quarter of women who suffer abuse and violence will use the justice system, we have to ask whether we are putting our resources in the right place to deal effectively with these women and children.

For example, the government did develop two pilot specialized court programs in Toronto called the domestic violence courts. We know as well that the government expanded hospital-based sexual assault programs and included domestic violence in these to also get evidence to use in criminal cases. The government as well introduced the Victims' Bill of Rights, but we all know that

has been challenged in court by victims, and the court then demonstrated that no rights have actually been conferred on victims as a result of the passage of this piece of legislation.

The establishment of the Office for Victims of Crime was announced in the throne speech. We are waiting to hear from that office with respect to their response to deal with the May-Iles inquest.

It is very clear that the government is taking a very limited approach to how it addresses violence against women. Most of the initiatives have to do with the criminal justice system, and that's not a bad thing. But if only a quarter of the women who are being abused will ever use the justice system, what do we do about the remaining 75% who are trying to flee from their abusers and who need the support in the community in order to do so?

It is clear that if you are going to deal holistically as a government with the issue of abuse against women and children, then changes to the criminal justice system have to be in addition to, not an alternative to, community women's services. The government has to understand that it can't be one or the other. The changes to the criminal justice system have to be seen as changes in addition to profound, increased support for community-based services, because those are the support services women are using when they flee from their abusers.

As a result of the very tragic and very horrible death of Arlene May, the coroner's inquest released a number of recommendations—about 230 in total, if I recall—early in July 1998. Some of the recommendations included, and this came from the jury itself, that the preferred form of victim services for women and children should be the independent model based on community women's services; for example, shelters.

The jury also recommended expanding counselling for child witnesses within women's shelters—not outside the shelter system but within shelters. And they recommended a review of all funding for shelters in the province.

The jury recommended that a government-community committee be struck to implement the recommendations and that all the ministries of government, when they were bringing forward recommendations to deal with domestic violence, should deal with women's advocacy groups before those initiatives were implemented.

And the jury recommended that the coroner would report on the progress of the implementation of all the recommendations a year after the release of those same recommendations.

1900

What has happened since the recommendations have been released—as I said, there were at least 213. OAITH had standing. The Metro Action Committee on Public Violence Against Women and Children had standing. They were able to make clear to the jury how systems worked, how community-based services worked, why they were important and why women felt more comfortable going there than entering the criminal justice system etc.

As a result of all that work, what has happened is the following. Immediately upon release of the recommendations, the Attorney General's staff said that 95% of the recommendations were in fact being worked on. What was interesting about that announcement was that it was some four months later that the joint domestic violence committee, which was supposed to deal with all the implementation, was finally formed. So the Attorney General's staff waited four months after they made a grand announcement that 95% of the recommendations were underway to finally establish the committee that the coroner had recommended be established to look at implementation.

What's interesting to note is that OAITH, the transition houses, were not included in the government's committee. One of the groups that had standing, one of the groups that made a profound impact upon the jury during the May-Iles inquest, one of the groups that deals directly with women and children who are fleeing their abusers because they operate shelters in the province, counselling for women and children, children's witness programs, was not included in the government committee that was established to implement the recommendations that affect women and children who are affected by violence.

Second, the coroner did report in September 1999. And because most of the changes that came in the recommendations had to do with changes in government policy, what the coroner did in essence was give an accounting from the various ministries of government that were affected on what they had done in the last year.

It's interesting to note what the government provided as responses to the May-Iles recommendations, and I just want to cite some of these.

It's clear that initiatives that were implemented by previous governments, such as the introduction of emergency legal aid for abused women in shelters, were included as a government response to the May-Iles inquest recommendations. The expansion of the domestic violence courts, announced by Charles Harnick a full year before the release of the May-Iles recommendations, was also included as part of the recommendations to the May-Iles inquest, even though it had been a full year previously before the recommendations came out.

Interjection.

Ms Martel: A whole year before the recommendations even came out. I'm not sure how the government could possibly have included that in the recommendations when it was announced a full year earlier. Of course it wasn't a response.

The current funding of 98 women's shelters and 100 community counselling programs, which had been in place long before the inquest took place—in fact, some of these shelters have been in place 25 years—was also included as part of the government's response to the May-Iles inquest. It had nothing to do with the May-Iles inquest. Those shelters were already in place. They had been funded by three different governments. That had nothing to do with the recommendations that were made

by the coroner's jury—nothing—but the government chose to include it as part of what they had done.

The shelter funding review was deemed to be implemented because it had been uploaded through the Who Does What committee. So the 20% funding of basic shelter costs came to the government, and the government included that as its response to the shelter funding review that the coroner's jury had recommended. That had nothing to do with what the coroner recommended. The jury clearly recommended a review of shelter funding to ensure it was adequate. The fact that the government picked up the 20% the municipalities had formerly paid for had nothing to do with a full-fledged review, which is what the jury had demanded.

Fifth, the jury's recommendation for increased independent supports for women in the community, such as shelters, was implemented by virtue of a pilot project which was already located in a Toronto agency. Again I have to say that the government deemed to be implemented one of the recommendations the jury clearly made, by the mere fact that a pilot project was located in a Toronto agency.

A number of other recommendations that had to do with community-based support, which is important to OAITH, which are the services women use when they flee from their abusers, were bypassed completely by the coroner. He suggested that those critical issues about funding for shelters, funding for counselling in shelters, funding for children's witness programs were not going to be addressed by him or the government but would be addressed in the Office for Victims of Crime report. That hasn't been released yet, so we don't know what the government response is going to be.

It's clear that unless you were an expert in Ontario government initiatives and when they were implemented, the government used many things that had already been in place, that had already been implemented, as part of their response to the very direct recommendations that came from the May-Iles coroner's inquest.

What's also interesting is that the domestic violence joint committee that the government was told to implement also made recommendations earlier this year. What happened there was that they released yet another 173 recommendations on how to implement the 213 recommendations that came from the May-Iles inquest. The good thing is they recommended a time frame for each one. The really dismal part of all this is that we would have yet another 173 recommendations on how to implement the very important 213 recommendations that already came out in July 1998. Clearly what we're going to have happening as this continues is that the very important matters of how we fund shelters, shelter reviews, how we fund counselling services, how we fund child witness programs in shelters are not going to be dealt with. They will be put off again and again.

It's as a result of what has happened in terms of, at times, a very inadequate response to the important recommendations that came from the May-Iles inquest and the fact that domestic violence is increasing that OAITH

sent this document to all of us. They have called on the government to do a number of things:

(1) Immediately fund the equivalent of at least one additional women's direct service community support worker and one additional child and youth support counsellor for each women's shelter and each second-stage housing program in Ontario. The total cost would be less than the \$18 million that the government has talked about giving as a bit of a tax break to the NHL if the NHL decides to stay in Ontario. I'm sure we could probably find that money somewhere if we could find it for the NHL.

(2) Immediately implement a review of the funding for women's shelters, as was requested in the May-Iles coroner's jury, and second-stage housing programs with a view to increasing these funding resources.

The coroner's jury made it clear that women's community services were extremely important, and we know from what OAITH has given us that 75% of women who flee abusers use those services. That's why they're making the kinds of recommendations for change that they are. I hope the government would follow up seriously on those most important recommendations for community-based services, because those are the ones that women and children who flee violence really need.

1910

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm pleased to speak to the House calendar motion. There has been some talk on the part of the Liberal opposition, and even some of the third party, that there was actually no need to have an extension of the hours, and I'd like to speak to that.

The motion said that "the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 23, 1999, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until Monday, April 3, 2000."

Some members of the Liberal Party, specifically the member from St Catharines, indicated that if we had come back sooner, it wouldn't be necessary to sit longer. The member from St Catharines said that our government was being arrogant and deceitful in not coming back sooner and that we were treating this as a dictatorship. The member from St Catharines and all members of this Legislature know that we couldn't come back sooner. Shortly after the election, I came into this chamber, I saw the renovations that were going on and I wrote hundreds of letters to my constituents pointing out that we would not be back on the date the House calendar had set because it appeared to me at that point that there was no way those renovations would be complete. In fact, as we know, the renovations weren't completed until a month after we would normally have come back. The member from St Catharines and many members of this Legislature attended the opening ceremonies for the new chamber. We all agreed that it looked very nice. It was a job that was long overdue.

Having a one-month delay necessitates that we sit longer. It means night sittings. But that's OK. Most of us don't mind. There are a few who think we are being

arrogant. I don't think that's arrogance. I think it's democratic, and I think it's what the people of Ontario expect of us. We've heard a lot of debate in this House. Our government believes in the democratic system. We believe in allowing debate to carry on.

Sometimes the debate seems a little superfluous when we hear, over and over again, the members on the other side speaking about tax cuts and how we wouldn't have to do this or we wouldn't have to do that if we didn't have the tax cuts. I'm going to ask a few of them right now. The member from Ottawa-Vanier: Did you give your tax cut back? No reaction. The member from Don Valley East, Mr Caplan: Did you give your tax cut back?

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: You didn't give it back? OK.

I'll ask the House leader of the Liberal Party, Mr Duncan, the member from Windsor-St Clair: Did you give your tax cut back?

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Yes, I did.

Mr Wettlaufer: He said he did. Well, that's not bad. One out of three.

Mr Duncan: If you count the user fees I paid.

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, now he's being conditional. In other words, he didn't give his tax cut back. There was provision in the budget, in 1996, to give your tax cut back, and you haven't given the tax cut back. The members of my constituency who are watching this on TV tonight, I know what's going through their heads right now. I can't say it in this House, but I know what they're thinking. They're thinking, "How dare you speak out of both sides of your mouth," which I can say, but I can't say the other thing, the three-letter word starting with "I" or the multi-letter word starting with "h". I can't say those. Boy, would I like to. I wonder how you go back to your ridings—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. This is the winter season, and although it's awfully nice outside—the sun is shining and it's warm—it is the winter season. That's the season for playing hockey, and we think of ice. I think we're all getting onto very thin ice. I think we would be better to get back on thick ice.

Mr Wettlaufer: I will say that this is also the season of goodwill, so in the spirit of goodwill I won't be too critical of them any more—well, for a couple of minutes anyway.

We have spent a lot of time in this House in the first few months of this government term. We have debated and passed Bill 5, and the Liberal Party voted unanimously for it. We also introduced and debated and passed Bill 7. We debated and passed Bill 8. We debated and haven't yet passed Bill 11. We're getting there. We plan on passing Bill 14 as well.

There has been much debate on these bills. We have spent time being considerate of the opposition parties, considerate of the democratic process and considerate of the fact that there must be debate in this House on many of these bills. That takes time, and that is why we must sit a little longer.

Of course, there is always the possibility that the opposition parties may choose not to spend a lot of time debating some of the bills that are coming forward or have come forward, in which case we will not need to sit until December 23. That possibility exists, and I'm the first one to admit it. However, we on the government side must recognize that you may want to give full debate. For that purpose, it is necessary to sit until December 23. If you want to go home and do your Christmas shopping early, you know what the alternative is.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: December 30? I can't introduce that, but of course I can discuss it with the House leader, I say to the member from Don Valley East. If you would like to sit over Christmas, I certainly can sit over Christmas. It's no skin off my nose.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Will you buy me a gift?

Mr Wettlaufer: Buy you a gift? That would be a frosty Friday in, wherever.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): You got a tax cut.

Mr Wettlaufer: My colleague the member for London West says we already gave you a Christmas present. It's called a tax cut. By your own admission you didn't turn it back.

I also want to ask the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, who has now come into the House: Did you give your tax cut? No, he didn't either. To the member from Algoma-Manitoulin: Did you give your tax cut back?

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, you didn't either. Isn't this interesting? Nobody I've asked so far on that side of the House has given his tax cut back. They argue against it, they waste a lot of time arguing against the tax cut, but they didn't give it back. Where are your principles?

I confess I didn't give it back either. I'm using mine to help a family in need. Are any of you doing that? Oh, you're not doing that either.

Interjection: There's the food banks and the United Way.

1920

Mr Wettlaufer: I give money to the food bank. I give money to the United Way. But I am also directly helping a family in need. Which one of you is doing that? I submit to you that I care very deeply for my constituents. Many constituents want the tax cuts, and I'm helping constituents in need as well.

I have to say that the NDP have very great principles, and we know from which side they are always going to debate. They feel very strongly that we are not doing the right thing. That is their feeling, and they stand by that at all times. We know that. But the Liberals: Do you know that in 1995, in their red book, they campaigned that they were going to limit health care to \$17 billion and, get this, they would add \$17 billion to the debt before they could balance the budget. Understand that. They said they would add \$17 billion to the debt before they would balance the budget. But what have they done for the last

four and a half years? They have criticized us for not balancing the budget sooner. I have stood in this House more times than once and said, "Yes, we could have balanced the budget sooner, if we had done like the Liberals and restricted health care spending to \$17 billion." We are spending \$20.6 billion, and that is going to increase again. It will increase each year for the next five years. It will increase by 20% over the next five years. But you people don't talk about that. You tell us we're not spending enough, but you were going to spend \$17 billion.

We know that our tax cuts have increased government revenue. We know that. It has been evident. It was \$49.5 billion in 1996-97, and it's \$54 billion this year. That's government revenue. They like to sit over there and say: "Do you thank the federal government? Do you thank the US government? Do you thank all the other provincial governments?" I'd like to point out to them that the growth in our province is the highest of any region in any of the countries in the G8, right here in Ontario. You say: "What about trade? Isn't it great that we're trading to the United States?" If we weren't creating a competitive environment in this province, we wouldn't be trading anything to the United States. But I realize you are Liberals and you do have trouble understanding that from time to time. I can appreciate that.

There was a book written a number of years ago called *Double Vision: The Inside Story of the Liberals in Power*, by Eddie Greenspon. You're possessed with a multiplicity of double vision. I don't know how you can have so much of it. It's wonderful. I wish I could be so blessed. But unfortunately, I got my education at a time when black was black and white was white, and you know, I still think that one plus one makes two.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm being criticized over here because I'm also German. Knock it off.

I'd like to point out too that we spent much time debating the throne speech. The Liberals and the NDP opposed the throne speech. They didn't like what we had to say, what the Lieutenant Governor said. Businesses liked the message in the throne speech. I'll give you an example.

Rod Seiling, president of the greater Toronto hotel association—remember Rod Seiling? He was an all-star hockey player; now he has a very responsible position with the greater Toronto hotel association. Also, Judith Andrew—do you know who Judith Andrew is? She is only the vice-president for Ontario of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—you know, that small association representing about 80% of small businesses in all Canada. They're the ones who create 80% of the jobs in this province. They don't mean much, though, right? Judith Andrew said, "On behalf of small business, we were looking for all the commitments that Premier Harris had made, pre-election, to our members, and we were able to tick a lot of them off in the throne speech." Isn't that nice? Business people are creating jobs and they like our message. Do you know something else? I

went back to my riding after the throne speech, I went back to my riding after Bill 7, after Bill 14, and I keep hearing from my constituents, "You people are doing the right things."

Last Friday, a couple of senior citizens came into my office. These two senior citizens are retired former municipal employees, and they both told me they were former members of the NDP. They had voted NDP all their lives until this last election. Do you know what they said to me? They said: "Wayne, we like what you're doing. Keep it up."

In 1995 I was outside the Budd plant in Kitchener distributing my brochures during the election campaign. And I believe it was the secretary of the CAW—he turned around from going into the plant, came out to me and said: "Wayne, we're going to endorse you. But if you do not keep your promises, we'll be on your doorstep every day." Do you know, those people have never been on my doorstep. They like what we are doing. They represent the rank-and-file, blue-collar worker in my riding. They represent the rank-and-file, blue-collar worker in all of Ontario.

These are the people who work hard for their money. These are the people who want the tax cuts because they turn around and invest that money or spend the money, and when they spend it, it creates other jobs. When it creates other jobs, those people in turn pay taxes. The cumulative tax money from 617,000 net new jobs is rolling into government coffers, an increase of \$5 billion in revenue for this province. What are we doing with some of that money? We are turning it back into health care. What are we doing with some more of that money? We're putting it into education.

I am very happy to be part of a government that keeps its promises and, yes, part of a government that is willing to sit longer in this House, if necessary, in order to give the opposition time to debate. Whether or not the debate makes sense, I think it's only reasonable that we allow them to debate the issue, to debate the bill, to debate budget Bill 14, to debate Bill 11, the act to reduce red tape, the one that governments want. They want less red tape. They want so little red tape that they can create more and more jobs.

There is now a prediction that there could be 825,000 new jobs from 1995 when we started to 2005—825,000 net new jobs, 825,000 people working who weren't working before. The people in my riding want those jobs.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'd like to seek consent from the House to share my time with the member for Ottawa-Vanier.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? Agreed.

Mr Gravelle: I'm very glad to have an opportunity to speak on the calendar motion before us. It gives me an opportunity to talk about a number of issues that I wouldn't have had the opportunity to talk about were we not discussing this and extending our time in the House, and thank God we are, considering that we did come back so late. Notwithstanding the comments by the member for Kitchener Centre, the fact is that we had

every opportunity to come back earlier and it was disgraceful that we didn't.

May I also say that I find the member's remarks and the actions of this government quite hypocritical in terms of their attacks on our concerns about the impact government decisions are having on our constituents and people across the province. A government that talks about tax cuts, talks about the fact that they are trying to protect people and give them more money in their pockets, is adding extraordinary user fees all over the place that are nothing more than tax increases. When you've got a government that has allowed tuition fees to rise to the extraordinary degree they have in the past four years—imagine what that means if you want to talk about your tax cuts. I speak to many constituents who tell me they don't notice any significant difference as tax cuts are concerned because of the extraordinary differences in user fees.

1930

The government promised there would be no new user fees. What did the Mike Harris government do? It imposed user fees on seniors and disabled people in terms of prescription drugs. It was a shameful thing to do—\$250 million, and they said they wouldn't do it. Just a week or so ago, we found out that the Family Responsibility Office is going to be charging user fees to people who are receiving family support. They're charging user fees for them to access their accounts. That's disgraceful; it's extraordinary.

We talk about small business owners. Let me tell you that Bill 79 was such a mess that during the campaign, and certainly before that and since, small business owners were furious at this government for the mess they made of the property tax. They are absolutely furious that they were having their taxes clawed back and were having to find huge amounts of money. Don't fool yourself. People aren't fooled by it. They recognize that the government has just tacked on user fee upon user fee, which is simply tax upon tax.

We know that hunting and fishing licence fees have gone up. The justification was, "We want more money to spend in our special purposes account." Then we find out there was \$4 million left over from last year. Meanwhile they're not doing any of the improvements related to that fund that they should be doing. I tabled a petition the other day from people in the Hurkett-Dorian-Red Rock-Nipigon area, who are very concerned about the fact that they can't get the Black Sturgeon road improved and it should be improved.

Remote camp owners in this province are being charged increases of 500% on the land-use permits for their remote camps. These camps are used three months of the year and have no power. There's very little access other than through snow machines. The fact is the government is ratcheting up the user fee by 500%. In fact about a year and a half ago, the government tried to ram through quietly, may I say, because it wasn't legislation, 300% increases on field sign advertising for small businesses on the highways—a huge issue. The former

Minister of Transportation backed down on it, because again he was attacking the business owners for signs they were putting up promoting their businesses.

It's extraordinary to me how the government can continue to sell this tax cut when it's very clear that it's all being ripped back, and people know it's being ripped back. I certainly am glad that I have an opportunity to express those feelings, because I feel very strongly about it. We all care about our constituents. Again you were directing some questions at us, "How do you feel about the doctor shortage in your particular area?" The fact is that you've become underserved areas as well and your government is taking no action to deal with that problem. We're waiting for the McKendry report. Then we find out that when the McKendry report comes forward, it's going to be sent to a panel of experts. Last week we had private member's legislation related to foreign-trained professionals. We need to get them working in our province, and the government will not do anything about that. There are answers to these problems, and it's astonishing to me that you stand there piously and attack us when we are fighting for the people of this province. We are fighting as hard as we can for the people of this province, and don't have to listen to you.

Excuse me for getting so upset. I want to use the rest of my time, if I can, to talk about some of the issues I won't get the opportunity to talk about.

I come from a very big riding, Thunder Bay-Superior North, made up of essentially the former riding of Port Arthur, the north side of Thunder Bay, and the former Lake Nipigon riding. I know the member for Brampton Centre, Mr Spina, who was in the north fairly often as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, knows the area well and was a big supporter of everything we want up there, and need in our communities.

It's a big riding and I am enjoying representing the constituents as much as I can and trying to fight for their issues. I want to talk about some of the issues in some of the communities in the time I have. Again, I'm glad we are going to be extending the sittings of the House till December 23, and I, like many others on our side, wish we could stay here year-round. The fact that we're not coming back in the wintertime is distressing. We should be here, and I'm sure the member for Kitchener Centre would agree with that.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's a lot warmer here than where I'm going to be.

Mr Gravelle: That's true.

When I look at some of the issues we're battling for in my riding, let me start in the beautiful town of Marathon. There is an extraordinary marina development there called Carden Cove. It's got extraordinary economic potential. The community, municipality and chamber of commerce have worked very hard to get it in shape as a future marina development not just for the community but for the region as well. We are very keen to have support for that project through the northern Ontario heritage fund. I've spoken to the minister about it and

I've written him a letter, and he's certainly listened to me on it, I hope. It's very important that we get that support. This is going to have an extraordinary benefit for the entire area around Marathon and I hope we can see that come to fruition by next spring. It's very important we move forward on that. It will make a huge difference.

Another issue that's of concern in Marathon is the fact that there is no part-time justice of the peace. Marathon is a community of about 5,000 people and it's very distressing to all of us that there is not a justice of the peace living in Marathon. We are working very hard to have that happen as well because we think that's a service they should be rightfully expecting to have. Again, I hope the Attorney General will be helpful in that regard as well. We think that's very important, so we're going to continue to fight for that.

Terrace Bay is a beautiful community right on the shore of Lake Superior that I'm sure many of you in the House have been through. If you haven't stopped, you should stop there. It's a gorgeous community.

One of the major issues there is a seniors' health complex, a former home for the aged, called Birchwood Terrace. Last spring I got up in the Legislature because I really felt that once it was closed down as a district home for the aged—and it's a beautiful building—it made enormous sense for the government of Ontario to return this property back to the people of Terrace Bay and Schreiber, the reason being that in I believe 1974 Kimberly-Clark donated that property to the province to be used as a home for the aged for the price of \$1. We were successful in having it returned for \$1.

There's been quite a discussion, quite a battle over it. The fact is that McCausland Hospital and the community are certainly willing to pay the appraised value for the building because they're very keen to turn it into a seniors' complex, which could be a wonderful opportunity for people who are needing that kind of help and service as they age to stay in their communities. But we need help from the government in that regard as well.

The fact is that the building itself has many repairs and maintenance that need to be done, and I'm hoping the government will be listening to us on this. They wouldn't listen to us in terms of what I thought was a pretty fair deal as in returning the property for the \$1 which the government received it for, but I would hope, in light of the fact that they weren't able to do that, that they will very seriously look at helping us get that building up to standards so that the community and the hospital can then purchase it and we can turn it into the complex that we know it really can be.

The town of Schreiber is a great railway town and certainly home of our former Speaker, Mr Jack Stokes, and the former member for Lake Nipigon, a wonderful man and quite a legend in northern Ontario. Schreiber is an extraordinary community. It's going through difficult times. Inmet Mines closed about a year ago and the industrial base is not great there. But boy, what a town with spirit. They've got all kinds of projects on the go—we're talking about a beautiful railway interpretative

centre—and they've got a great entrepreneurial spirit there, which I know the members on the government side will appreciate, and certainly all my colleagues do.

But I can tell you that there still are some concerns. One of the things that worries us is that once the Lands for Life process was completed and it turned into the Living Legacy process, there were decisions being made in terms of the use of some of the land around our communities in terms of parkland. The fact is that although I think everybody likes more parkland, we still have to recognize that everybody loves to go to a picnic but somebody has to bring the food.

One of the concerns we have is that an area very near some development that Schreiber might be looking at in terms of mining may be designated potentially as one of the protected areas. The concern we have about that obviously is that there needs to be the flexibility for the community to continue to develop, and to develop a tax base, but perhaps more significantly what we really need to be careful of or concerned about is the fact that the Ontario forestry accord advisory board is making a number of decisions related to the Living Legacy process with no municipal representation. It's crucial that we have municipal representation on that advisory board so that when there are decisions that are about to be made in that regard, the municipal representatives can be there who obviously know what's going on in their communities. It's a major issue and a major concern, and we've got to watch it very, very closely.

1940

Certainly in Nipigon and Red Rock, again remarkable communities and very beautiful, about 100 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay, what we think would really make sense there is a 24-hour truck inspection station. It makes a great deal of sense. We know that the former minister, about a year and a half ago, announced there were going to be 10 new 24-hour truck inspection stations across the province. Somehow northwestern Ontario got left out of the mix. We think that's wrong. We know the volume of traffic has increased dramatically. We have an absolutely perfect spot for it to take place. It's something that I will continue to pursue, obviously, on their behalf. I know that Mr Hastings—I can't remember his riding, but the former parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I believe—was up and spoke to them, and I really hope this will be looked at as a possibility. There certainly needs to be a truck inspection station; it's at the junction of Highways 11 and 17, and we are very, very keen on having that happen.

Beardmore: a remarkable community as well, the great, big snowman, for those of you who have driven through. It's a beautiful community.

Mr Wettlaufer: Great fishing.

Mr Gravelle: Great fishing; you're right. As you may also know, earlier this year there was a massive fire that very nearly burned down the town of Beardmore. There was an extraordinary effort by all concerned to save the town, but it was a very big and frightening fire. But

typical of the spirit of Beardmore, reeve Eric Rutherford has come out with an extraordinary proposal called the Phoenix proposal whereby he will take a lot of the dead wood that has been gathered as a result of that and actually turn it into a business. He's got a proposal that he has brought forward, and I know the ministries are interested in that, and they should be, because they never stop thinking.

Another aspect of that area we're looking at is the development of cottage lots. So we're very excited about that as well.

There are so many communities, and I apologize to those who are listening or watching for those that I missed.

The community of Jellicoe is a wonderful community: great hunting and fishing area, lots of lodges. It was absolutely devastated by the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, absolutely devastated. The general store was affected in a very negative way. It had a terrible impact and it was something we were very concerned about. I hope the government will continue to make sure it gives a fair compensation package, let alone looking at the whole process of how that cancellation took place. It was a pretty rotten deal, as you may recall. It was simply announced, end of story, and then some false consultation. That's not acceptable.

Geraldton, the home of the president of AMO, Michael Power, the mayor of Geraldton: again a community with an extraordinarily strong entrepreneurial spirit and economic base. One of the major concerns I have there, and I do hate to always be concerned simply with problems, because there are many positive things, but the fact is that the Ministry of Transportation has downloaded a section of 584 to the municipality. It's part of the provincial highway going to Nakina. It should not be downloaded. It's not fair, and it's something I think we need to pursue. Certainly the Minister of Transportation told me he would at least review it, and I hope that takes place.

Nakina: an extraordinary boom going on up there with the opening of the Buchanan Lumber sawmill. But you know something? They need OPP service up there now. The community has come back; it's back to life. Now they need full-time OPP service, and I hope we can get it.

The town of Longlac, another remarkable community in my riding and I'm very proud to represent it: many, many issues, of course, but one I will tell you is that the president of Beaulieu Bus Lines, Renald Beaulieu, a good friend of mine, is very concerned about the fact that it's difficult to get proper training places for his bus drivers. That's an issue for him.

These may seem insignificant or small, but they are very important, certainly to everybody in my riding. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to speak about them tonight. I appreciate the attention of the House. I will now pass to my colleague from Ottawa-Vanier.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Si j'ai bien compris, nous parlons sur une résolution sur le calendrier de la Chambre, et si j'ai bien compris, l'agenda de la

Chambre était de siéger jusqu'au 9 décembre prochain. Arriverons-nous à terminer tout le travail à accomplir ?

I expect that this government wants to introduce, as early as tomorrow, the bill concerning municipal restructuring and the downloading that comes with it. This government is obviously trying to limit debate and pass it before the end of the session.

How can you justify the ramming through of a bill that is causing such turmoil and dissension within the Conservative caucus? The members of this House and the people involved in this restructuring deserve that we take our time to look at every aspect of the bill. By the way, we don't even have the bill in our hands yet, so we don't know what it contains. We deserve a say before you choose to run this legislation through on a whim. People need to have a say in their reactions before we pass this bill. If time was such a concern, why was the sitting of the House delayed until this fall?

Êtes-vous vraiment un gouvernement responsable, un gouvernement qui n'a siégé que neuf jours avant cette session, a government that wants to adjourn the House until the spring? Is this what you call accountability?

This government has shown its arrogance countless times this year, and continues to show disdain by pushing forward bills without debate. It's as if this assembly has little or no importance for this government.

We, the Liberal caucus, use this Legislative Assembly as a forum to bring forth people's concerns. We come to the House only to have these bills rammed down our throats, with little or no analysis about their impact. If this government was concerned about ensuring the appropriate time being taken to examine the details of legislation, we would have sat much earlier this year.

J'ose espérer que la question de l'hôpital Montfort, qui dessert non seulement le comté d'Ottawa-Vanier mais la province dans son entier comme le seul hôpital francophone de la province qui donne des services en français, que son sort soit décidé dans les plus brefs délais. Vous savez que la décision de la cour divisionnaire, des trois juges, a été unanime. Vous devez aller de l'avant. C'est essentiel de reconnaître les droits fondamentaux des francophones. J'espère qu'on les prendra en considération et qu'on deviendra plus sérieux.

Let's be serious in this assembly. Let's pass bills and have a chance to talk on them and to debate them in all the essential little things that we have to do with these bills.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure for me to be able to rise and speak on this calen-

dar motion. I've heard a lot of moaning and bellyaching about sitting a few extra days, and complaining that we didn't come back early enough. I'm more than pleased to stay here until midnight on the 23rd, if that's what is necessary to get the necessary legislation through this House.

All through our previous term and into this term, this government and this party have not hung back. We've been prepared to take the bull by the horns and do what was necessary, and it has made a very significant difference here in Ontario.

For example, taxes are way down, significantly lower than they were back in 1995, even back in 1990. Just listening yesterday to the Minister of Finance talking about retail stores being up some 7%, after the jump last year, it's really going places. New jobs and all kinds of things are happening in Ontario.

The opposition talks a lot about how to govern. It's far easier to be throwing grenades than it is to catch them, and they certainly have that experience.

We have ended up returning hope and prosperity to this province, and I'm sure when the history books are written, there will be a lasting legacy for this government about the stimulation of the economy.

On the House calendar, as we look at how long this House will be sitting, to December 23, I'm very proud to sit until then and recognize the necessary things that the government has to do.

As such, I move that this question now be put.

The Deputy Speaker: I find that after the amount of debate, I cannot accept a closure motion on this motion.

Further debate?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do believe the standing orders of this House allow for unanimous consent on any matter before the House, and I believe we have unanimous consent that this motion be called.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent that the question now be put? It is agreed.

Mr Klees has moved government motion number 12. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Hon Mr Klees: Mr Speaker, I will move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1952.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 1 December 1999

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

House sittings, government notice of motion number 12, <i>Mr Sterling</i>	
Ms Martel	1017
Mr Wettlaufer	1020
Mr Gravelle.....	1022
Mrs Boyer	1024
Mr Galt	1025
Agreed to	1025

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 1^{er} décembre 1999

MOTIONS ÉMANANT DU GOUVERNEMENT

Heures de séance, avis de motion du gouvernement numéro 12, <i>M. Sterling</i>	
<i>M^{me}</i> Boyer	1024
Adoptée	1025

No. 22



N° 22

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 2 December 1999

Jeudi 2 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 2 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 2 décembre 1999

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

GREAT LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION ENVIRONNEMENTALE DES GRANDS LACS

Mr Ouellette moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to regulate the discharge of ballast water in the Great Lakes / Projet de loi 15, Loi réglementant le déchargement de l'eau de lest dans les Grands Lacs.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Before we start, I have to say that we could be just a tad groggy this morning. Last night Dad was on night shift and Josh, my oldest boy, was waking up from about 2 to 5 and I had to take care of the scary monsters that were sucking on his thumb. But we've had our caffeine fix and we assured our oldest son, Josh, that there were no scary monsters under the bed or in the closet, although I can't really say that there are no scary monsters in the Great Lakes.

I can't say that to my son, Josh, of the things that are happening out there, that have taken place, such as the zebra mussel, where its accidental introduction through ballast water discharge has now brought in the zebra mussel, which is costing municipalities and agencies thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars in clearing these areas to make sure our water discharge or our water intake are clear, or at the nuclear plants, that everything is clear for the intake and the discharge of water there. There is a large number of invading species that have come into Ontario because of accidental discharge in the Great Lakes.

Essentially what we are trying to do here is address the issue of the accidental discharge and, as I did with Josh, or try to do with Josh on a nightly basis, do a little bit of prevention. To make sure there are no scary monsters, we check underneath the bed and in the closet, or we read a story about Winnie the Pooh and the gang on what goes bump in the night and explain everything to him.

The best thing that takes place is prevention. According to a federal study in 1991, 29% of the releases

associated with the introductions is through ballast discharge water in the Great Lakes. Essentially what happens, for those who are watching and don't understand, is that a ship coming from another port in another area will pick up ballast water to make sure if they're coming empty that they're stable within the ocean. While they are picking up this ballast waters in the ports, other than a Canadian port, or it could be on the other side, in the Pacific Ocean, for example, they would pick up new species such as the zebra mussel or the spiny water flea, which has had a significant impact in the recreational fishing industry in the Great Lakes. Then they come to Lake Ontario, to the ports in Lake Ontario where they would then discharge the ballast water when they pick up their cargo. When they discharge that water, whether it's the actual species that's introduced or whether it's the eggs that are introduced there, they now become part of our ecosystem in the Great Lakes. We have to do something about that.

According to the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, there are three typical types of invading species and the way they come about. There are the natural invaders, such as opossum or the white-tailed deer; they normally just expand their territory and move into Ontario. Once upon a time, we never had white-tail in Ontario. It has now moved from Virginia north into Ontario and has expanded its territory, as has the opossum, along with others. So there is natural.

Then there are the accidental invaders, which are the ones we are trying to address now, such as the zebra mussel; or in 1959, when the St Lawrence Seaway was opened, the sea lamprey came into the Great Lakes and caused a great number of problems.

There may be some questions and I hope there is some debate later on about the onus of the federal government, being that the control of the waterways is under the jurisdiction of the federal government. However, a lot of these programs, for example, the sea lamprey program, are under a lot of pressure. Every year the province is pressuring the federal government to commit to doing the program to reduce the sea lamprey because of the impact it has.

1010

I would like to bring forward one area just to emphasize the extreme that this could take. For example, six years after the accidental introduction of the comb jellyfish, which came from a ship from the US from the Black Sea, they saw a reduction in the fish harvest of 90%. Think of the impact on the fishing industry within

the Great Lakes, both commercial and recreational. The recreational fishing industry in the region of Durham represents approximately \$75 million annually. That is being substantially impacted now by the spiny water flea. For those who don't know, it attaches to the lines of charter boats that are out and bends around the line. You can't even reel in your lines when you're fishing. So you have to regularly clear the lines. If something along the lines of the comb jellyfish were to be introduced, it could have a substantial impact on all aspects of the fishing industry.

I mentioned the accidental invaders, such as the zebra mussel, the sea lamprey, and there are others, of course. Then there are the intentional invaders, such as the ring-necked pheasant, the rainbow trout or the wild turkey, which has been reintroduced in Ontario. These are under controlled situations.

We get into problems with things such as the spiny water flea when it's accidentally introduced into the Great Lakes. There is no natural predator out there to control it. In the locations it comes from, it has controls and predators which, through evolution, now feed on the spiny water flea, but we don't have anything in the Great Lakes that will take care of that. It's the same thing with the zebra mussel, although we do have some diving ducks which are feeding on the zebra mussel now. Mind you, the population is still expanding, and the ability for the zebra mussel to expand is far greater, reaching into the Keweenaw and the other lake systems within Ontario. So it's not just the Great Lakes that are being affected; it's all the other lakes as well. The natural predator is not evident when the release takes place, and this is where we get into difficulty.

Essentially what we're asking for is a ballast water exchange. The preference is a deep-water exchange, where a ship coming across the Atlantic Ocean to Ontario, to the Great Lakes, would be asked to exchange its ballast water at depth levels of about 2,000 metres. The reason for that is the saline level, the salt level, of the water and the fact that there is a low concentration of wildlife or species concentrated in those depths. So when the ship comes out of a port, it now moves into the centre of the ocean, essentially, where it does a ballast exchange. It now brings in salt water, and when that is brought into Lake Ontario and exchanged in ballast because they're taking on their freight, there is less chance of introducing species, first of all because of the high salt content in those areas—when introduced into fresh water, they have less chance of living—and secondly because there are fewer species in those areas.

We also get into areas where the ships are not coming across the Atlantic, they're coming up the Laurentian channel. It is about 340 metres deep and has a high saline content as well, which will reduce the chance of species being introduced for the same reasons I explained earlier. Of course, there is the problem of rough waters. That is taken into consideration in the bill to ensure that in the event of severe weather, the ship is not obligated to do a deep-water exchange. However, quite possibly when they

come into the Laurentian channel they could do a shallower-water exchange to reduce the incidence.

There was a study, as I mentioned earlier, in 1991 that showed it was 67% effective in reducing the possibility of the introduction of species. As I mentioned earlier with Josh and his night—last night was one of those—prevention is the best method of stopping any of these from occurring.

There are some other areas, and I only have 10 minutes. I want to touch on areas that I think the people who may be watching can relate to. We have another introduction that has not been noticed very substantially yet. The reason I say "yet" is because the Eurasian ruffe, which has been introduced, will directly compete with walleye and perch. The other night we had an event here with outdoor organizations. There were a lot of them in attendance and perch was one of the items served. When you get into competition with walleye and perch, the average recreational or commercial fishing person will certainly have a greater say about whether we should or should not be trying to control this.

In closing, the one thing I'd like to say is: Don't worry, Josh, we tried to take care of the scary monsters or the big snake last night that was sucking on your thumb, but we're going to try and do something. Because that's what we're here for. It's the children of tomorrow we have to try and take care of.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join the debate for the private member's bill from the member from Oshawa. As an explanatory note, the bill "prohibits ocean-going ships on the Great Lakes system from docking in Ontario if they have not complied with ballast water control guidelines prescribed by regulations" in order to reduce the occurrence of invading species, which obviously have a tremendous impact on our ecosystem in the Great Lakes system.

I would also add that it has a tremendous impact in my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. We have Georgian Bay, Lake Simcoe, Kempenfelt Bay. We have seen zebra mussels invade cottage country and the water systems in our area. They start out on the shoreline, and in our area they now have moved to the middle of the body of water and have a tremendous impact on other species within the ecosystem of our lakes. What we have found is that the algae being removed from our water system results in a clearness of the water and actually increases the growth that would happen in the body of water as a result of the sun not being reflected by the less clear water. So we have tremendous impact in terms of the clarity of the water and also the other species within these bodies of water.

This particular piece of legislation has restrictions on ships that dock: "The master of a ship shall not dock the ship at a provincially or privately owned dock or wharf in the Great Lakes system if the ship has not complied with the ballast water control guidelines since it last entered the system," and, "No one who has the management or control of a provincially or privately owned dock or

wharf shall permit a ship to dock there if the person has reasonable grounds to believe that the ship has not complied with the ballast water control guidelines since it last entered the Great Lakes system."

The impact, as I think the member from Oshawa has indicated, is significant in terms of the species that enter. I have an article from the *Globe and Mail*, November 1999: "Asexual Flea Threatens Great Lakes." It's called the fishhook water flea. "The Great Lakes have some new inhabitants. Nesting side by side, 50 to 80 of them could fit within 6.5 square centimetres of space. But their small size belies the potential that these fishhook water fleas hold for causing big damage. The new inhabitant is a native of the Black Sea." And now it's in our body of water in the Great Lakes.

"The new arrival has worried scientists, who call it and other foreign invaders biological pollution that can be far more dangerous than the chemical contaminants often viewed as the biggest threat to the Great Lakes.

"Unlike chemical pollutants, which eventually break down, biological pollution can replicate and is almost impossible to remove once it becomes established." That's the threat we are facing with respect to our Great Lakes water system.

I fully support this piece of legislation by the member from Oshawa. It'll have a tremendous impact. Obviously what we're facing now in our ecosystem in the end also will affect tourism, cottagers, the economy of what we have in our waterway systems, which is a fundamental support in terms of the economic well-being of the tourism of this province. It's going to be detrimentally impacted.

I would say that since the federal government is refusing to do anything on this issue, has raised a deaf ear, I think it's about time the province has done something to regulate this area.

1020

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm very delighted to support this private member's bill from the member for Oshawa. It's certainly a very responsible bill. But I stand and wonder, where on earth has the federal government been, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the Minister of the Environment? For 40 years they could have been doing something about this. Why is it a Legislature in the province of Ontario that has to come in and look after the waterways in Canada? It's most unfortunate they didn't act ahead of time and get this kind of thing looked after.

As a long-time cottage owner on the lake called Kashwakamak, just south of the Mazinaw, there's an indication that we may have zebra mussels coming into that lake. I don't think it's a matter of will it happen in some of those lakes, like the Kawarthas, that were mentioned earlier, it's a matter of when is it going to happen.

As a veterinarian, I see new diseases, new parasites, new organisms coming into our country without a natural predator. We all know the quantity of eggs—we've heard that in our biology class—that some insects can lay and

how they can multiply at just a phenomenal rate, particularly if there isn't any predator there.

A good example of that is the fishhook water flea that has just recently been introduced. We hear about the clogging of fishing nets in the Black Sea, and that's probably the kind of thing that we're going to see here in the province of Ontario, at least in the lakes and rivers.

Just at a time when the Great Lakes are recovering from some of the pollutants that have been in there and we're seeing a lot of new fish returning to the Great Lakes that haven't been there for some time, it's rather ironic that some of these other problems are coming in.

I think it's interesting that Professor Paul Herbert, head of the zoology department at the University of Guelph, makes reference to this water flea. He says: "We are at risk of losing many of the native and novel species of North America. It strikes me as a tragedy." I agree. Indeed, it is a tragedy.

Just simply changing the water out in the ocean—the salt water is going to kill these organisms, whether it's zebra mussels or fleas or insects or whatever. The test on the water ballast is pretty simple, a little taste test. Is it fresh or is it salty? We don't have to go to a great chemical analysis to sort out whether they did it or not. I just can't believe that we've come this far and this long without this being in place. It's certainly a federal responsibility.

Just in winding up, to leave some time for others in our party to speak, this kind of thing is so important to the waterfronts in all of our ridings, the tourism. I look to places like Campbellford, Hastings, Cobourg, Rice Lake, which want to upgrade their waterfronts, and then we have this kind of thing coming in in ballast water. I'd just say to Herb Dhaliwal, the federal Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, and I say to David Anderson, the Minister of the Environment for Canada: "Where are you? What have you been doing? This is a most important thing. Why does Ontario have to bring in legislation to walk you into this?" I brought in a resolution on animal abuse roughly a month ago and finally, yesterday, it was released by Justice Minister Anne McLellan that they're going to do something on animal abuse. They're going to change the Criminal Code.

Why on earth does this party, the Conservatives of Ontario, have to hold the feet of these federal ministers to the fire and finally get them to do something by holding their feet to the fire? Here's another example. Maybe the Liberals in this House could talk to their federal cousins to get things moving, to make things happen in Ottawa. They're at their fundraisers. They were just down there last weekend. Surely to goodness they could do something with their federal cousins.

I look forward to this bill passing, and compliment my cohort from Oshawa for bringing in an excellent bill.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It's with great pleasure that I rise in the House to debate this bill and give my support to it. I want to compliment the member for Oshawa.

I want to do this in a little bit different fashion, if I may today. I'd like to talk to you about a specific micro-organism that exists in the sea. It's a very tiny micro-organism. It's so small that really it wouldn't take up much space on your nail on your baby finger, but it is one of the most powerful micro-organisms in creatures in the great seas.

This particular creature is responsible for controlling some tide patterns; it's responsible for creating tide pools. It actually creates spawning grounds for fish and separates predatory fish from smaller fish. It is a tremendously powerful creature and yet it's so small that you could crush it with your finger. It could dry in the sun within minutes, and it could be swept away in the tide or the wind.

The creature is a coral and that coral has created one of the biggest ecosystems in the world, the Great Barrier Reef. So when people thought talking about this particular bill, "You know this is a silly bill that doesn't make much sense because we're talking about micro-organisms. What impact can they have on such an infinite quantity of water as the Great Lakes?" The Great Lakes are not infinite. They are a finite resource and they can be impacted. If you consider the impact—the great impact, the positive impact—of coral on the seas, the Great Barrier Reef and what they have created, the reverse can also happen.

When you have micro-organisms come into our Great Lakes that are foreign species, the reverse can happen. The impact can be untold. When you have a number of these species come in and they start interacting with each other and impacting the ecosystem, you get a synergistic effect that is untold, unparalleled, and absolutely no scientist on earth can guarantee with any degree of certainty what the long-term impact from these creatures would be. So this bill is more about a motherhood issue. For many people it means nothing because it's such a tiny creature, but you have to look at the larger picture. You have to stand back and realize that the impact over a long period of time is devastating.

I hope the bill passes and I congratulate the member for bringing it forth.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): After hearing previous speakers to this bill, I must say that there is some silver lining to this cloud of controversy surrounding the arrival of the zebra mussel and the quagga mussel, and I'm now referring specifically to Lake Erie. Changes have occurred in Lake Erie, particularly since the arrival of the zebra mussel, and the lake has become significantly clearer. One positive in all this is the fact that the clearer lake has inadvertently given a real boost to the dive tourism industry, and around my town of Port Dover, divers like Jim Murphy have been advocates of writing new legislation to protect some of the wrecks that are much more accessible. Again, I thank the members for their vote last week on this legislation.

However, the fact that Lake Erie is getting clearer is not good news for everyone, particularly if you're a species of fish that thrives in an ecosystem based on low

visibility. Ministry of Natural Resources data collected from commercial fisherman daily test reports show that bass and rainbow trout are benefiting significantly from the changes to Lake Erie. Unfortunately, walleye, also known as pickerel, and yellow perch are being negatively effected.

Ministry data shows that commercial harvest has declined significantly since the introduction of the zebra and the quagga mussels to Lake Erie. This is particularly true in the east basin of Lake Erie, that section from Long Point east down towards Buffalo. Landed value of east basin fish harvest has declined by 59% since the zebra mussel and the quagga mussel have been established.

It's hard to believe that the invasion of our Great Lakes has been allowed to continue unchecked by the federal government.

I support this move by MPP Ouellette to force Ottawa to stop this invasion of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Ottawa needs to take immediate action to work with industry to develop the technology to effectively treat ballast water in a safe manner, to establish ballast water treatment facilities and to develop policy and regulations to stop this continued invasion of our lakes.

Once these exotic species become established in a large open system like the Great Lakes, they're almost impossible to eradicate, hence the importance of prevention as mentioned by MPP Ouellette. The best we can hope to do once they are established is to slow their spread.

As we've heard today, to date there are about 140 exotic species that have entered the Great Lakes, including the quagga mussel, the zebra mussel, the round goby, the ruffe has been mentioned, sea lamprey, plant material—purple loosestrife, for example—and more recently, the fish hook water flea. Many of these invasions have caused significant environmental and economic impacts to the Great Lakes.

1030

Most of the exotic nuisance species have been introduced through ballast water in ocean-going ships. Current federal guidelines require ballast exchange at sea to kill freshwater exotic species. However, these guidelines do not apply to the majority of ships. They do not apply to about 90% of the ships that carry exotic species in the slops down below in their empty ballast tanks. These exotic species are eventually released into the Great Lakes and, very clearly, constructive action needs to be taken.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to commend my colleague the member for Oshawa for his concern about this particular matter on the Great Lakes and inland waters.

He's quite a star now, I'm told. A lot of people have seen him in commercials, even on CNN—I can't remember if I've ever made CNN—the infomercial for the National Rifle Association that he's been involved with. He is really a person now, not only this bill. This bill comes right after the member being part of the National Rifle Association commercial. It must have to

do with gun laws or something like that if it's the National Rifle Association.

It's good to be able to be in the same room as somebody that famous. I don't think I would ever go on one of those commercials. It was on television. People are phoning me, and saying that they're seeing the member for Oshawa in this commercial with the National Rifle Association. I know that you wouldn't agree with their position of not banning assault weapons and some of the positions they've taken on such things as guns getting into children's hands. But I digress. I just wanted to say the member looked quite impressive in these commercials.

With regard to this bill, I want to say that it is a problem. He will recall, being a member who represents a constituency which is adjacent to the Great Lakes, the great problem with zebra mussels. There are other problems as well, we recognize, but that problem was one which focused a lot of attention on species that would come from elsewhere to Canada. We probably have some species here that others wouldn't want introduced in their inland waters either. But it did focus on a problem that I think is an important problem.

The dilemma is how to solve the problem. I looked at the bill and I said—maybe the member will clarify this in his final two minutes—did his bill go to the Red Tape Commission and to the economic policy committee of cabinet before it was developed? Because what usually happens with a bill of this kind, if it were a government bill coming through, is it would go and it would get some comment from those two bodies, because it does involve red tape. Sometimes red tape is required.

But my friend Mr Wood tells me that he would be concerned about something that would have any affect on red tape. I know he will probably want to even express his view on this if he gets a chance. Perhaps we can give him some of our time and he can do so.

I'm not trying to be negative, because I like to see members come forward with an issue of this kind. I talked to a few people about it. A person by the name of Reg MacGregor in St Catharines has done some considerable research on it. Again, we're on the shores of one of the Great Lakes. Listen, I can tell you, I'm not an expert on shipping and the oceans, but I understand there's a problem—and the member may have addressed it before I was able to be here today—of the exchange of ballast waters out in the high seas, out in the ocean and how there is some danger to that. Is it true that you have to take all of the water out and then new water comes in, something like that and the balancing of the ship and so on?

I understood that was a problem. There is some considerable research perhaps going on now. When you talk about tax cuts, for instance, I've been a person who's critical of these continuous income tax cuts which I think deprive us of the kind of government services that we require. One incentive I would like to see, either federally or provincially, is an incentive type of change to the taxation system—and perhaps it's there today—which

would allow people to conduct some research into this matter.

I think the member would agree with me and would seek this to happen as well: We could develop some technology to address this matter even without having to change the ballast water. People tell me that can be done. I'll believe it when I see it.

The very fact that you're raising it in the House is useful in that it may prompt individuals to go even further in the research into this matter. Somebody else has said to me—maybe the member knows this—what happens if a ship comes to Hamilton or Thunder Bay and we say it can't go in? Where does it go then? Does it go back up the St. Lawrence Seaway and so on? I wonder if the economic policy committee of cabinet would have given you a hard time about that because it's interference with business. Frankly I don't think it's valid to say that because something happens to interfere with a particular business operation it automatically should be rejected. I'd be interested in the member helping me out with that, as to what would happen in that case. To be fair, I didn't have the opportunity to hear his initial remarks, which I'm sure covered a lot of the territory I'm talking about now.

If you want to talk about water quality, I have a great concern and I hope we would see more work on the whole issue of water quality, which is important for the Great Lakes. One of the ways to improve that water quality is to continue to implement the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, which deals with the actual toxicity and quality of water around the province. That was a program which was initiated in the 1988 period, somewhere around there, and was designed to deal with all effluent going into the Great Lakes from any waterways in Ontario. It was to squeeze tight the taps on pollution going in. I suspect much of that program might have fallen by the wayside because what it requires, I can tell the member, just as any program that's suggested by any of us, is resources and staff to be able to do it.

I have a great fear that the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, the very substantial and important water pollution regulation, is not being enforced as it should be and that further work is not being done in that regard. That deals with industrial discharges, it deals with discharges from municipal sewage treatment plants and it even deals with some indirect discharges which come from streams and rivers going into the lakes.

The member has centred his remarks on specific species that come into this country from somewhere else. One of the solutions that is recommended and that I'm always very apprehensive about is heavy chlorination—I think that's the word—applying a lot of chlorine. The problem with that is that chlorine acting with other substances in the water can produce some toxicity we wouldn't want to see. While I know that in some cases in desperation people have tried more chlorine, or different ways of applying the chlorine, which is probably better; in that case it would be certainly something we could look at.

I would like to see more research. I'm hopeful that the member raising this in the House will bring about that research as to how we can solve this problem without actually having to prohibit ships from coming into our ports. Although he and I don't want ships coming into the ports that are going to cause problems for us, getting to stop them is another matter.

I understand as well—he may have said this—that there's a conference in February of this year, I think in Toronto, dealing with this matter. I was informed of that. It would be interesting if perhaps the member and I, and some others, could try to get to that conference. The member could talk about that with some of the people who are at that conference. Raising that issue with that kind of profile would be very interesting.

Developing the technology, I keep hearing from people who are more expert than I on this, is certainly going to be very important.

The complication of changing the bilge water in open seas is something I guess you're going to address; people have brought it to my attention. The Americans I think have the ships go to Massena, New York, and the coast guard inspects them there, but what they do if they don't pass the inspection I'm not really sure, whether they send them somewhere else. Massena is, as we know, quite a way up, as people are coming in. It's not as though it's in one of the inner Great Lakes.

1040

We have only voluntary guidelines now. I'm not a fan of voluntary guidelines at all. I think the member and I will agree that some enforced regulations, when they are agreed upon, would be the best way to go. The cost of shipping: Some of the more expert people in the business field on the other side, who often speak about the impact on business, may know this. Somebody told me it costs about \$25,000 a day to operate the ships, and if you stop them for a certain period of time, it costs them money. I don't know if that's true and the member may be able to help me out. I hope he can help me out on that, because that is certainly a problem they would put forward.

The member from Sarnia, by the way, left me some of her notes. She was not able to be here because of the crisis in her riding where there's a toxic waste dump that's leaking, a toxic waste dump that was expanded considerably, without a full environmental assessment. That's one of the problems we encounter.

I look at the total problem of Great Lakes water quality. This is one aspect of it that should be addressed. There may be other aspects. I certainly hope we work on water quality. I saw the last report of discharges in Ontario. It was abysmal, the amount of toxic waste going in. Sewage treatment plants are not being upgraded the way they used to be because municipalities don't get the money to do it any more. Sometimes we can add more sophisticated equipment to those sewage treatment plants.

There are many ways of impacting our inland waters. This is one way of addressing it, and I think we should address it, but I also hope members of the House will

want to address, through treaties with the United States, through federal-provincial agreements and actually through tough action on polluters, the problem of the poisoning of the Great Lakes with various substances which are discharged either directly or indirectly into the Great Lakes.

I hope we have in this province a renewed effort to press forward with the Municipal-Industrial Strategy for Abatement, both as it affects direct discharges from industries and discharges from municipal sewage treatment plants, because that's where a lot of the material is being dumped at this time.

I have a note that someone else wishes to have a moment or two on this, so I'm going to relinquish my time right now.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I want to thank the member for allowing me to have a couple of minutes. As a former chairman of the Toronto Harbour Commission, I fully support this bill. I just want to raise a couple of concerns.

Members may know that when the St Lawrence Seaway was built, it was meant to turn Toronto and the Great Lakes ports into world ports. Unfortunately, by the time the seaway was built, it was already obsolete because the depth that it was built to was 27 feet and most of the very large ocean-going vessels have a draft of 48 feet. What that has done is create a problem for some ships; as they come in, they get rid of their ballast so they won't run aground.

One of the problems I really wanted to address—I assume there's both provincial and federal involvement—is that as a sailor I've noticed, this summer in particular, that the water levels are extremely low. Certainly in Lake Ontario and in the port of Toronto, I've been talking to the officials and there has been a greater number of small pleasure craft running aground because of this. Not keeping the water high enough compounds the problem. If goes down a foot or two, the big ships have to compensate in exactly the same way to make sure they don't run aground.

I think it's an area we all have to get involved in. There's no question—the data have been confirmed—that the introduction of zebra mussels into the Great Lakes water system has been traced to a foreign vessel offloading its ballast. That has done that, and who knows what other foreign marine life has been introduced into our system.

I really feel that this is a bill we should support. My only concern is whether we can get that message to the responsible authorities for them to do something about it. I think it's good that we're presenting this message; I just feel it really is something that has to be done in co-ordination, not just with Canada—you have to understand that the Great Lakes certainly border on the United States as well and they have to get involved. I want to commend the member for introducing it and certainly I will be supporting it.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Thank you, Mr Speaker. I congratulate you on how

quickly you've learned all the new ridings of the members in your new job. I don't know if I've ever congratulated you on your new position.

I want to also commend the member for Oshawa for bringing forth this bill today which I'm happy to support. If you'll bear with me, I want to read a little bit from an article to put this in perspective, as many members have done, but even more so, why it's so important that legislators try to deal with this issue, which has been around for a very long time and in fact is getting worse.

There's a story by Martin Mittelstaedt in the *Globe and Mail*, November 22, 1999, called "Asexual Flea Threatens Great Lakes," and there's a subheading to that: "Creepy Infestation." I'm going to read a little bit from that story by Martin Mittelstaedt.

"A creepy looking, asexually reproducing water flea, translucent except for its single black eyeball, is the latest foreign animal to be discovered in the Great Lakes, alarming wildlife experts.

"First noticed by anglers on Lake Ontario last year, the fishhook waterflea, with its space-alien looks and long tail, has since spread to Lake Michigan and to six of the Finger Lakes in western New York.

"Large numbers of the flea clog fishing nets in the Black Sea. Nets become so coated the animal is called 'frost,' and stinking masses of the creatures have to be cleaned off before the gear can be used again.

"It is expected to infest the entire Great Lakes ecosystem eventually and could seriously disrupt sports and commercial fisheries."

That's just one example which I'm sure the majority of people aren't aware of. Most people are familiar with the zebra mussel, I believe. We've not addressed this issue very consistently throughout the years. It continues to grow, it continues to be a problem, and I'm happy to see the member attempt to address it. I want to say that I see it as a Pr bill, and I think that's important. It's important to raise those issues in the House. I think it's important to pass this bill today, but upon reading the bill, I have a lot of questions about the enforcement capabilities and who is actually going to regulate it and enforce it. How is it actually going to work?

The member talks about the federal government's responsibility in this, and of course he is quite right. He says in his preamble, which, by the way, I was very grateful to get—and I thank the member for Sault Ste Marie who quickly provided me with this background today. It means that I can talk more directly to the bill in the 15 minutes I'm taking here, although I will spend a little time as well talking about some of the other problems we have in the Great Lakes because I think it's all connected and all relevant, not just to our commercial industry but to our environment and to the people of the province as well.

It says in your preamble, "If ocean-going ships adhere to appropriate guidelines, such as the Great Lakes ballast water control guidelines of the Canadian Coast Guard, it should reduce the probability of additional non-native

species being introduced, that can be harmful to the balance of nature that now exists."

1050

This has been in existence for a long time, and I applaud the member for trying to get the province involved. But at the same time, I can't believe that a member of the government actually, when the government is cutting environmental protection like crazy—and I know you don't like to hear this, but it's true. There are not enough people left in the Ministry of the Environment now to regulate and enforce the Environmental Protection Act we have in place. I hear that daily as the environment critic. You don't hear me get up in the House a lot to talk about it—we only have so many questions a day—but I have a list this long of environmental problems that have not been dealt with by this government and the Minister of the Environment because the workforce is no longer there to deal with it. So I think it would be a legitimate question, even if the environment hadn't been cut so much, how this is going to work.

I know that the member would like, after this bill is passed, I'm sure, by all parties, for the government to actually take it seriously, even though it's a private member's bill, and work with the federal government to finally find ways to effectively deal with this problem. This bill isn't going to do it. However, what this bill does is raise the issue once again, up the ante, and say that the province does have to get involved.

The member for St Catharines raised a good question—and I'm sure the member for Oshawa thought about this and he does mention it briefly in his preamble—about what you do with a large ship that comes to port with a load of goods on a tight timeframe and it is discovered that the captain hasn't followed the guidelines. Right now we have guidelines, but if this is law, do you then send that ship right back into the ocean to dump before he can unload the goods? I don't know, but I presume that's what has to be done. Obviously a huge education program would have to be put in place so that ships coming into Canada, and into Ontario specifically right now, would know that not just a fine—because as mentioned in the act here, they might be willing to pay a fine rather than going back to the ocean and dumping, as prescribed by the law. The fine has to be significantly high enough that it will be seen as a big enough deterrent, so that they will either have to pay a very large fine or will have to go back out to the ocean and dump before they can come back in.

I want to talk a little bit about the water quality in the Great Lakes, and certainly the member knows—and I understand he's dealing specifically today with a problem—that the problems in the Great Lakes are much more complex than dealing with exotic marine species. There are still millions of tonnes of toxic waste going into our Great Lakes, and I would like to see the government bring forward strong bills to deal with that and to fund the citizens' body that has been dealing with the Great Lakes cleanup for a number of years, to deal even more effectively with the toxins that are going into our

Great Lakes. In fact, the government cut the funds for these bodies that have been working on this, and it is thanks to them that the cleanups that have happened over the years have come about.

The other issue that I want to touch on briefly is the taking of water from our lakes in Ontario. I understand that the Minister of the Environment just came back from an environment ministers conference in Calgary and that the provinces failed to reach an agreement with the federal minister on the wording. Who knows? Different provinces had different problems, but at the end of the day we're most disappointed, as I'm sure everybody in the House is, that the provinces and the federal government could not finally come to an agreement on how to prevent bulk water from leaving our provinces. They were unable to do that.

I would also like to see the government take this on, not just as a private member's bill—and I'm sure the member would appreciate that as well—

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): Private members?

Ms Churley: The member from Dufferin-Peel has something to say here. In fact, I would say that I had a private member's bill passed in the last term of office of this government on carcinogens, cancer-causing carcinogens. You may recall, when we were in government we did a study—Ruth Grier, then as the Minister of Health, did a comprehensive study—on cancer prevention. That was just released shortly before the election in 1995. That document has been shelved. I took one little piece of that and brought forward a private member's resolution, on which I got all-party support for the government to start the immediate phasing out of known or suspected cancer-causing carcinogens that are being released into our environment.

He may have more luck, because he is a backbencher in the government, in getting to meet with the Minister of the Environment and bringing this bill forward should it pass today, but I haven't had any luck in meeting with either the Minister of Health or the Minister of the Environment to talk about setting up—and part of my resolution was to talk about setting this up, which was one of the recommendations—a stakeholders group to start this process. That resolution, which was passed enthusiastically by the entire House, is still sitting there. There has been no action on it.

That is often the fate, as we well know, of private member's bills from all three parties, including the government party. I would say that the member for Oshawa, being a government member, probably has more of an opportunity to push his bill forward than I had. But I want him and the House to know that that was passed by all members in the House, and we have not moved forward one little bit.

I would say to the member that there are a number of questions that we asked today. Again, I want to say I recognize that this is a private member's bill. I'm sure the member for Oshawa knows that once it's passed, a lot more work has to be done. Some of the questions we've

asked today: How will this be enforced? Who's going to regulate it? How is all of this going to work? Will the ships have to go back out to the ocean if they don't dump their water? What kind of educational program will be put in place? Are they going to sit down and meet with the federal government? I don't think, frankly, this can work, and I think the member for Oshawa agrees, unless the federal government steps up its laws as well and its enforcement and regulatory power.

Having said all of that, it's really nice to stand here today and, for once, see a member of the government bring forward for us all to debate a positive—what I consider to be, yes, an environmental issue as well. Of course, he brought it forward—and very importantly, and I'm not dismissing this—for our commerce, our anglers, fishers and tourists. For economic reasons, it's important that we debate this, but it's also important to our environment. Our whole ecosystem is affected by these foreign and exotic marine creatures and plants being dumped into our waterways, which causes huge problems.

It's easy for us to forget about it as we debate daily and read stories about so many other things daily in our newspapers. It's important that we're debating it today. I'm sure it will pass. Who could not support this resolution? If I can be helpful in any way, I realize I'm just a lowly third party member here—

Mr Tilson: Oh, you're more than that.

Ms Churley: Thank you to the member for—what's your riding now, not Dufferin-Peel?

Mr Tilson: Wellington.

Ms Churley: Dufferin-Peel-Wellington. He assures me that I'm not just a lowly member in the House, that I actually do have some clout. I'd be happy to work with the member.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Pardon?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Every member is equal.

Ms Churley: That's right. "Every member is equal in this House," he says.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Some more equal than others.

Ms Churley: Some more equal than others, but I don't see too many of those in the House this morning, actually. I believe we have one cabinet minister here. Of course, she's more equal than the rest of us, I would say. She's not even looking up. She knows who we're talking about.

Coming back to the bill, I do support it. I look forward to its passage today. My offer still stands. If there's anything I can do to assist in making sure that the government actually, after it's passed, moves forward on it, takes some responsibility for it and works with the federal government to make sure that something actually happens here, I would be very pleased to do that.

1100

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate? The member for Oshawa has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Ouellette: I'd like to thank all members, the members for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Northumberland, Stoney Creek, Haldimand-Norfolk, Brant, St Catharines, York Centre and Broadview-Greenwood, for their kind words today. I'll try to answer some of the questions that were brought forward.

Yes, there is going to be some difficulty in dealing with the federal government on the enforcement of the actual act, but I should point out that the American coast guard currently stops and inspects all ships entering the St Lawrence Seaway to ensure that the ballast water has been exchanged. The difficulty is that they're dealing with US ports.

However, the Canadian and the American coast guards currently have monitoring or demonstration methods of showing ships coming into the Great Lakes how to do exchanges. So, since the Canadian Coast Guard is already doing it and the American coast guard is regulating what's taking place on the US side, although it doesn't have any bearing on what takes place on our side in Ontario, hopefully we can get the feds to work with the coast guard to push it a little bit further.

Some of the concerns that were coming forward from the member for St Catharines regarding deep-water exchange in heavy waters, I mentioned earlier that typically you try to do a 2,000-metre exchange, where the water level is about 2,000 metres, because of the saline level and the minimal species content in those areas. Also, in the event of heavy water, you have the Laurentian channel, which is about 340 metres deep. It has a high saline and a low species content in those areas. So the possibility is reduced, not as much as the deep-water one, the 2,000-metre one, but it is reduced. So when they come over and they can't do an exchange in deep water, they have the opportunity in the Laurentian channel to do an exchange there.

There is other work that needs to be done as well. There are some new methods of filtration coming forward, as well as treatment in the event that somebody comes in who has not exchanged. I thank all members for their support today.

The Acting Speaker: The time for this ballot item has expired. It will be further dealt with at 12 noon.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LES PROGRAMMES DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ POUR ÉTUDIANTS

Mr Gravelle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 10, Loi visant à offrir des

programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Let me begin by saying how pleased I am to have the opportunity to bring forward a private member's bill that, if successfully implemented, will have a positive impact on young people entering the workforce today and in the future.

Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students, is quite deliberately non-partisan and in fact is meant to bring together in a coordinated fashion many of the health and safety initiatives that have been developed over the years by government, safety associations, educators and injured workers' groups across the province.

This legislation will create a health and safety educational council made up of students, injured workers, workplace health and safety experts, employers, educators, school boards, labour and community organizations. This empowered council will recommend programs to educate secondary school students on their rights and responsibilities when it comes to health, safety and occupational disease in the workplace.

We believe this council will be able, at virtually no expense to the government, to take health and safety instruction for students, which is now an identified part of the high school core curriculum, and turn it into a reality in the classroom. As with so many aspects of the new curriculum, many educators and school boards have had difficulty figuring out how to realize these outcomes. This legislation can serve as that vital link between good intentions and real success by involving all key sectors in an effort to put the right health and safety information directly in the hands of students—the future workers and leaders of our province.

There's no question we must continue to find ways of reducing accidents and fatalities in the workplace. By properly educating our young people before they enter the workforce, we can hopefully move towards a time when these tragedies no longer occur on a daily basis. But as of today, the facts speak very clearly to the need for us to treat this issue of workplace health and safety as a top priority. It is on that basis that I am seeking the support of all members in the House for my private member's bill today.

Every day, 50 young workers are injured on the job in Ontario, adding up to 18,000 injuries a year. The Industrial Accident Prevention Association has confirmed that workers between the ages of 15 and 25 have an injury rate 35% higher than any other age bracket. In 1999, so far, five young people have died on the job; 19 more young people lost their lives over the previous two years.

It is for those young people whose lives were so tragically cut short, and indeed for all workers and their families who have endured tragedy in the workplace, that we have put together this particular piece of legislation. I say "we" because this bill has been developed through the hard work of so many people who have dedicated

their lives to the elimination of workplace injuries and fatalities, people who have lost a family member or who have experienced a workplace injury themselves.

Since first being elected to this House in 1995, I've had a close working relationship with the injured workers' support group in Thunder Bay. Together we have fought many battles on behalf of injured workers and, I will admit, have been strongly opposed to many of the measures this government has brought forward, measures that have impacted negatively on workers' rights and compensation to those injured on the job, battles that we will continue to fight. However, the main goal of injured workers' groups across this province has always been to work towards the prevention of workplace accidents, a goal that I know is shared by people of all political stripes.

In any event, about two years ago, I had a conversation with Ross Singleton, a Thunder Bay resident with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, related to the need for provincial legislation to inform young people of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace; in other words, to take some positive action that could reduce or eliminate the accidents and fatalities that were occurring at a disproportionately high level to young people entering the workplace for the first time. After much work and consultation, we developed my private member's bill, with the hope that it would receive support from the Legislature and indeed from the government itself.

Let me make one thing very clear: While I recognize that private members' bills, and particularly those from opposition members, do not often receive support from the government, I am hoping that the non-partisan nature of this bill will allow it to receive consideration by the government members in particular.

In that regard, I am grateful to the Minister of Labour for meeting with me prior to today's debate and committing to arrange an initial gathering of interested parties to move forward on the goals of this legislation regardless of today's vote.

Let me once again be very clear: Our goal is to find a vehicle that will provide needed, appropriate and useful education to young people all across the province that will help reduce tragic and preventable accidents and fatalities in the workplace. I believe, as do Ontario's injured workers, that this legislation can be the vehicle by which we achieve this very important goal.

I am pleased to tell you that we are receiving support for this legislation from all across Ontario. I am grateful for that support and I want to thank everyone for their efforts and energies on our behalf. Particular thanks must go out to Ross Singleton, the true driving force behind this bill, and Steve Mantis, another Thunder Bay resident and national coordinator of the Canadian Injured Workers Alliance. I am pleased to have the strong support of Karl Crevar, president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups, who is with us in the members' gallery today. Special thanks also to Francis Bell, executive director of the Injured Workers Resource Centre in

Thunder Bay, who has worked so hard to rally support for this bill, and Muriel Poster of Thunder Bay, who tragically lost her husband in a workplace accident and has since become an extraordinarily effective advocate for survivor issues in this province.

I also very much appreciate the strong support of all the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups across the province who passed a resolution in strong support of this bill at their annual convention this year. I also want to thank Ken Jones, a Thunder Bay district representative for the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers national safety task force. All of you, and countless others who are supporting us in our efforts, have lifted our spirits and made us determined to achieve our goals.

I'm very grateful for the input provided to me by Paul Kells, whose son Sean died tragically in November 1994 in a workplace accident. After the inquest into his son's death, Mr Kells committed himself to ensuring that this needless accident would not be repeated. He established the Canadian chapter of the Safe Communities Foundation, a non-profit organization that brings public and private sector organizations together with the goal of making Canada the safest place to live, work and play. His advocacy for safe workplaces has now extended into 13 Ontario communities.

Mr Kells's input into my efforts here meant a great deal to me, because in many ways it is young people like Sean who are the motivation behind this legislation. We need to work with organizations like the Safe Communities Foundation to coordinate access to health and safety education for all high school students. As Mr Kells pointed out to me: "It would be a surprise to me if any one person or group had a complete handle on all that is now happening within both the school and labour systems. If that is indeed the case, then it would be a major advance to quickly inventory what is happening, assess what is working best and then help with co-ordinated implementation across the province."

1110

That is exactly what the Health and Safety Educational Council proposed by this legislation can achieve: a quick inventory of what is out there, a quick assessment of what works, and the ability to implement it across the province.

We know that Sean Kells's tragic passing, and the subsequent coroner's inquest into his death, also motivated the Ministry of Labour to put a great deal of effort into designing a student education package on occupational health and safety. This project, which unfortunately never saw the light of day, is remarkably similar to the goals set forward in my bill. This education package was developed in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Training, the Industrial Accident Prevention Association and various other internal and external supports.

The rationale for this project, as put together by the Ministry of Labour staff, said:

"The project's purpose is to instill an early entry level into the student's work life an awareness of basic

occupational health and safety concepts, rights and responsibilities and locally available resources. Creating student awareness will assist in the transition from school to the workplace as it relates to the Ministry of Labour's mission of advancing safe, fair and harmonious workplace practices."

Fine words. It is indeed unfortunate that after so much hard work and devotion by dedicated ministry staff, the project never was implemented. But perhaps today we can properly honour Sean Kells, as well as the hundreds of Ontarians who have lost their lives on the job, by supporting this legislation I am putting before the assembly today, legislation that can potentially make a positive difference in the lives of all Ontarians and can make all of us here in the Legislature today feel that we have done our part for the people and the workers of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to congratulate the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North for bringing this piece of legislation forward, if for no other reason than that it gives us in the New Democratic Party a chance to get up and point to some of the very devastating and destructive things that this government has done where health and safety of workers is concerned in this province, and to encourage the government in support of this resolution this morning to begin to talk to people about health and safety in the workplace, and in particular talk to young people who will inherit in years to come the programs and protections, or lack thereof, that we have passed on to them.

Anybody who understands what is going on in the workplace knows that it's organized labour over the years which has fought and gone on strike and negotiated and worked with management and others to put in place the health and safety regulations that we now so often take for granted. They sometimes work their way, if you have a government in place in a province like Ontario—and we've had a few over the last 10 to 15 years, but certainly not in the last four years—which understands the need to enshrine in legislation through employment standards etc, through the development of offices like the Workers' Compensation Board and attendant committees, and structures that work with workers and others, to make sure we understand the health and safety hazards that are out there, and that we do things to not only minimize but to wipe them out altogether.

This government has the unenviable record of consistently and systematically, first of all, diminishing the role, the power and the influence of organized labour in this province, over four years, at a rate not seen certainly in my lifetime. Others I talk to in the labour movement, who have been in this business in a bigger way and for a longer term than I have, say to me that over a number of years health and safety regulations and other regulations fought for and negotiated for and agreed to by enlightened management, in some instances, have evolved and have been put into legislation and have become part of all

kinds of standards across this province. That came to a screeching halt in June 1995 when this government, with its anti-labour, anti-organized labour, anti-union rhetoric and program, systematically and slowly chopped away at that. It's there for all to see who want to visit Web sites from our caucus in this place. If you want to look at the record of the government, it's there as well.

The NDP labour law reform that was brought in with so much excitement and enthusiasm by all workers in this province in the early 1990s was totally wiped out by Bill 7, on Tuesday, October 31, 1995, allowing scabs to steal workers' jobs again in this province.

The card majority system of union certification, which has been in place since 1950, was replaced by mandatory certification votes. This permits the employer to organize an anti-union election campaign every time workers try to form a union.

In addition, employers are permitted to instigate petitions for a decertification vote. This was the beginning of the erosion of the rights of workers and their organizations to speak for themselves and to demand developments in the area of health and safety.

Successor rights were stripped from crown employees. This means that when the Harris gang wants to privatize public services, the workers will lose both their collective agreement and their bargaining rights whenever a department is sold. We know that over the last four years that's been just moving along lickety-split, and nobody seems to know when it's going to end.

Workers in the contract service sector, like building cleaners, lose successor rights and their jobs whenever a contract changes hands, pounding wages back to minimum wage levels. Already, the workers who clean the Tories' Queen's Park offices around this place have lost their jobs.

This draconian legislation, Bill 7, was introduced on October 4 and rammed through the Legislature on October 31 without a single day of hearings because they didn't want people out there to know what they're doing.

If the resolution that we're debating here this morning is passed and this government is serious about it and they move on it, the youth and the students of our province will be given the history of labour laws and labour developments in this province in a way that will help them understand who's their friend and who's not, and what we need to be doing in order to enhance and further develop protections for workers in the workplace. The first thing they need to do is to recognize and honour the role that has been played by organized labour in this province over a long number of years now.

To move on very quickly, people in this province know very clearly that one of the agencies or organizations that has been front and centre in protecting the rights of workers where health and safety is concerned, the Workers' Compensation Board. We, as government from 1990 to 1995, had initiated a royal commission to take a look at it because we knew that it needed some fixing and some working with in order to make it work better for everybody concerned, particularly for workers

and those who are injured. That was completely and totally derailed. One of the first things that this government did where it concerned workers in this province was to derail the royal commission and take that very important board that was set up to protect both industry and workers at a time when there were lawsuits lying left, right and centre because of all of the accidents and deaths that were happening out there, so that companies weren't put under by lawsuits that were successful and would completely bankrupt them, and that would protect workers so that they didn't have to go to court and pay out the big money that they inevitably had to in order to make their case.

Following the proposals to gut workers' compensation in the Jackson report, Bill 99 was introduced in November 1996. Bill 99 takes \$6 billion in benefits from injured workers and gives them to employers, allows employers to force injured workers back to work prematurely, removes the independence of the Workers' Compensation Appeals Tribunal, gives workers' private medical records to employers, erodes inflation protection for WCB benefits, terminates the Occupational Disease Panel, and forces injured workers to get their accident claim forms from the employer.

Accident cover-ups will be massive. This returns Ontario to the days when the burden of proof is on the worker and the benefit of the doubt goes to the employer. It outlaws compensation for chronic stress and limits benefits from chronic pain.

I, with the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, am going to be supporting with my caucus this resolution this morning because it's time we took the cloak of secrecy off what this government is doing to workers across this province, particularly where it concerns their health and safety. The youth of this province need to know what health and safety is about. They need to know who the champions have been. They need to know who has gone to bat for them and they need to remember that if they don't pay attention and do something about it, what we have lost will be compounded and all of us will be the losers.

1120

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford.

I'm a little worried today. My daughter Natasha, who is 16, is going to take her driving test today. She's very much looking forward to obtaining her driver's licence. I and all Ontarians are concerned that as our children grow, progress in life and very enthusiastically enter the working world they are very safe. Our government wants to ensure that Ontario is the best place to live, work and raise our families.

It is my pleasure to rise and speak in response to Bill 10. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for his bill. As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I would like to say that we welcome the private member's bill from the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. However, I would like to

state from the outset that we will urge the House to vote against it, as most of its key objectives are already being met by our government.

Bill 10 provides all parties in the House a great opportunity to debate the important area of health and safety protection for young workers. Our government's goal is to make Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world. Bill 10 speaks of the need for greater co-operation between our partners in safety. More can always be done, we agree, but many would agree that in the past few years the province's occupational health and safety system has blossomed into a true partnership. Many agencies and organizations are working together to help achieve this goal and to reduce Ontario's injury rate by 30% between 1995 and 2000.

Health and safety is very important to us for two basic reasons: the human toll of death and injury, as well as the economic toll of lost productivity in the billions. No one can put a price on human life or injury, but we do know that the price tag in compensation costs and lost productivity to Ontario employers is in the billions annually. I agree.

We all agree that healthy workplaces are productive workplaces. They give Ontario a competitive edge over other jurisdictions in North America. Investors are looking to invest in places with excellent health and safety records. It is seen as a plus and an indication of a skilled, dedicated workplace culture. In Ontario we are fortunate. We have a good reputation in this area, and I believe our health and safety record has contributed to Ontario's economic boom, as relayed by the finance minister earlier this week.

The other half of this equation of course is the turnaround that has taken place at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. It is a huge success story. Tough changes were made in our first term. The board is no longer a drain on employers' pockets, nor a barrier to new investment. Its finances are in order. Its unfunded liability has fallen from \$11 billion when we took office to just under \$7 billion, and it has jettisoned the compensation mentality of years past in favour of a new prevention mandate.

This week the board announced its new premium schedule for the coming year. Average premiums have fallen 24% since 1996. The credit goes to improved management at the WSIB, as well as the board's new focus on injury prevention and return to work. About two thirds of the rate groups, which is 128,000 employers, will see reductions in their premiums next year. This is because our government's policies have reduced on-the-job injuries, and we have worked hard to get injured workers back to work in a safe and timely fashion.

By and large these are positive times for health and safety in Ontario. But there are still high-risk workplaces out there. Add young, inexperienced workers to those workplaces and you have a recipe for disaster. Hence our renewed emphasis on young worker health and safety.

Mr Speaker, we have a special obligation to reach out to young workers and those about to enter the workforce,

just like my daughter. They need timely education and information that will help prevent needless tragedies. Young people can be intimidated by the working world at first. Too often the instinct is to keep one's head down and do what one is told. Young people need to know that they can ask questions and even refuse work if they believe it is dangerous. Much is happening on this front. There are a number of initiatives under way that realize the key objectives of Bill 10, including:

The young worker awareness program, bringing health and safety messages to over 60,000 Ontario high school students each year, plus website and advertising campaigns. It is supported by funding of \$750,000 annually from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board;

Peterborough Safe Communities Coalition sponsored the passport program, which credits local students for health and safety training taken, a great novel idea, typical of what we need to capture kids' attention;

The Introduction of an occupational health and safety component to grade 9 curriculum, which began in September this year;

Expanding this health and safety education program to cover all secondary grade levels by the year 2002.

The last point is a big breakthrough. It was a key element of the ministry's prevention strategy. In conjunction with the young worker awareness program, students will be aware of the employer's obligations to protect their health and safety, what questions to ask, and they will learn the safe behaviour and the use of personal protective equipment.

A steering committee has been formed consisting of the Ministry of Labour, WSIB, most of the safe workplace associations, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and other interested parties. It is developing resource materials to assist school boards and teachers at the local level.

The labour ministry's assistant deputy minister of operations is inviting key stakeholders to a meeting next month. They will discuss coordination of programs and further measures to raise awareness of young worker health and safety.

In general, young people will also benefit from recent advances in health and safety enforcement, education and prevention.

Using data supplied by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Ministry of Labour is concentrating its enforcement resources on workers in high-risk workplaces.

Prevention programs and initiatives are being devised under the leadership and new mandate of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. These programs are then delivered on the ground by the safe workplace associations and other agencies.

By targeting bad actors and high-risk venues, we are reducing the risk for young people accepting jobs in these areas. Our government will do all in its power to see that young people working at their first job or who are about to enter the workforce are provided with information and

education that they need to deal with the hazards in their new environment.

Our government is already meeting the key objectives outlined in Bill 10. As such, I would urge the members to vote against the duplication and added bureaucracy proposed in Bill 10.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise in support of this private member's bill brought today by the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. I would just suggest to the government that their initiative isn't good enough and they should be looking at an enhanced level. This is what Bill 10 does. It gives a direction, an approach, an opportunity for everyone in the province to get together and work so that we can realize what we all want to realize, and that's a safe workplace for our young workers.

The reality is still that 18,000 young workers in Ontario between the ages of 15 and 24 are going to be injured. Obviously that tells us—it certainly told the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North—that there is need for some legislation that will provide optimum opportunity to ensure there is a safe workplace.

1130

Certainly Rob Ellis, whose 18-year-old son Dave was killed on the second day of work in a bakery in order to get enough money to go to university, is supportive of this legislation. That's why he's worked tirelessly with all members in this House to try to establish some form of program in the schools of Ontario.

The member from Thunder Bay-Superior North has highlighted some experts. Let me tell you about another group of experts that this government should be relying on to ensure that a proper program is put in place. It's District 6 of the United Steelworkers of America from Sudbury. Four years ago, in response to the day of mourning for workers who are injured or killed in the workplace—and for the government members who don't know, that day is April 28—this district put together a safety awareness program for high schools. It started off very, very simply at five schools, affecting 300 students. It's now blossomed to 25 schools, affecting 3,000 students in Sudbury and North Bay. Two schools have adopted it as active curriculum, not passive curriculum.

District 6 includes Ontario and the Maritimes, and it's their hope that this program will spread across Canada in their area because they've announced that 60,000 workers across Canada between the ages of 18 and 24 were injured in the first three months of their employment. I would suggest to the parliamentary assistant and to the government that there is indeed much work to be done. The establishment of this council, which is the essence of this private member's bill, would ensure that proper programs, proper implementation, proper direction, proper and timely resources are put towards the program. Whatever any government member wants to say, that is not in place now.

I would like to commend Anne Rinneard and Al McDougall from District 6 for their excellent work in the Steelworkers' health and safety student awareness program in Sudbury, and of course commend the direc-

tion of District 6 and urge the government to use it as an example. Use what District 6 is doing in Sudbury and in North Bay as the example of what the member from Thunder Bay and Lake Superior is advocating today. It is not in place. It could be in place with minimum resources being used if in fact you accepted the private member's bill and the direction of the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North.

Let me read two very, very short stories: "When Jamal Banks got a summer job in a warehouse, he never thought about getting hurt. But the building he worked in had no safety guards, and Jamal fell 14 feet on to a concrete floor.

"Christy Spencer didn't worry about safety when she started to work after school in the fast-food restaurant—until she slipped on the greasy floor and broke her back.

"Christy and Jamal survived their accidents, but their injuries have changed their lives forever."

With this legislation, government members, we can change the lives of all people who are going into the workplace by educating them towards proper health and safety in the workplace. The member from Thunder Bay-Superior North should be congratulated. He is not asking too much. He is only asking for the safety of our students.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join in the debate on private member's Bill 10. The key point with respect to the member from Superior North is set out in the preamble of his bill and I would just like to read that:

"All Ontarians must work co-operatively to positively address workplace health and safety issues for all Ontario workers, including our young people. Young people should enter the workforce with an awareness of their rights and responsibilities regarding workplace safety and occupational disease. Raising community awareness about workplace injury prevention measures and promoting health and safety is good for Ontarians, good for society, good for Ontario workers and good for business."

Who can argue against that? It certainly is a principle that everyone shares.

What I'd like to deal with here is to show you why the remainder of the bill is not necessary. The legislation that's being proposed is redundant. As the member has indicated, he's met with the minister. There are going to be government initiatives taken with respect to this issue. Quite frankly, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which has been in effect since 1979, sets up a procedure and the framework to deal with internal responsibility. There is a responsibility of all the workers and management and the company directors to deal with and promote health and safety.

The member from Sudbury is not incorrect when he says that much more work needs to be done—certainly it needs to be—but increasing the bureaucracy and taking a big-government approach to dealing with this issue is not going to answer the questions we have to deal with. What

we have to deal with is what the government is being proactive about.

The government is committed to reducing the number of young people injured on the job. As of September 1999, Ontario grade 9 classes have the occupational health and safety component, and by the year 2002 grades 9 to 12 will also have it. What that means is that the new four-year high school curriculum includes specific health and safety expectations in six courses: science, health and physical education, technological education, business studies, the arts, guidance and career education. So on the educational front the government has taken initiatives to make sure our young people understand what occupational health and safety is all about. Also, there is a young worker awareness program which brings the health and safety message to 60,000-plus Ontario high school students each year.

The focus of what we have to do is to make sure that once this education component is instilled in our young workers, when they go into a workplace it is set up properly through the joint responsibility system under the Occupational Health and Safety Act; that the framework is in place to make sure there is a priority put on not only young workers, but also that when workers enter a new workplace they understand their duties and responsibilities and that management and the other experienced workers within the workplace understand their duties with respect to dealing with health and safety within the workplace. It's a joint responsibility system, internal responsibility, and we have to make sure it works.

A number of government initiatives that are well on the way to realizing the bill's key objectives include:

—As I said, the young worker awareness program, which brings the health and safety message to over 60,000 Ontario high school students each year.

—A Web site and an advertising campaign.

—An introduction of the occupational health and safety component to grade 9 curriculum in September 1999.

—Expanding the health and safety education program to cover all secondary grade levels by the year 2002.

Also, the Peterborough Safe Community Coalition sponsored the passport program, which credits local students for health and safety training taken. My good friend Gary Stewart, the member from Peterborough, is certainly a true and strong supporter of that initiative in Peterborough.

The ministry has led a steering committee developing health and safety resource material to assist school boards and teachers at the local level. The assistant deputy minister of operations invited key stakeholders to a meeting as of January to discuss shared best practices, coordination of programs, and possible improvements to awareness, education and training in health and safety matters.

So the government has taken initiatives. We have to do as much as we possibly can to ensure that all workers, not only young workers, receive the proper education, the proper understanding, so they are not only competent in

terms of understanding their duties and responsibilities and familiar with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but also that we can ensure that when workers go into a new workplace they're going to understand their requirements and can also be an active participant to make sure their duties are followed through; also, the duties and responsibilities on other workers, on foremen, on the upper management team, the company directors—that they all work together to make sure there's fairness and safety taken in terms of training our new workers.

1140

With the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which became law on October 1, 1979: We certainly have gone a long way and we have a longer way to go, because we have to make sure that the underlying principle and intention of the Occupational Health and Safety Act are the concept of joint or internal responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. This concept, which was recommended by the Ham royal commission, is something that we have to make sure actually works, and I think that's the message that is being put forth by the member from Superior North and the member for Sudbury, that we have to make sure that we not only provide the education but that it works in the workplace.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I want to commend my colleague the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North on bringing forward Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students. I also want to commend him for the kind of consultative work that I know my colleague did in bringing forward this bill, consultative work with people who have been affected by the tragedies that occur with workplace accidents, particularly with young people, and consultative work with people who are involved in understanding what needs to be done to prevent these tragic workplace accidents and deaths from occurring in the future. I can only wish that the government could follow this kind of model of consultation so that they would bring forward legislation which is as relevant to real problems as Bill 10, which is being brought forward today by my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North, and that addresses real problems in ways which can work effectively.

When my colleague first spoke to me about his intention to bring forward this bill, I thought it was probably a very good idea. We're all conscious of the tremendous number of accidents that occur in the workplace. One statistic I have in front of me that may have been used already today is that on an average day in Ontario at least one employer in the province is informing a family of a fatality; another three workers will have amputations; 70 will be permanently disabled; and 500 injuries will result in lost time—horrendous statistics. Clearly, workplace safety is something we need to do much more about.

I thought my colleague's idea of bringing workplace safety into the high school curriculum would be a way of shaping the attitudes of young people so that they would have a lifelong awareness and understanding of how to practise workplace safety. What I hadn't fully realized

until I'd had further discussions with my colleague was that this bill will do more than shape the attitudes of future adults in the workplace and prevent tragedies for adults in the workplace, but that there is an incredible number of young victims of workplace accidents. The statistics were shocking to me, and I think that warrants reading them once again in this place.

As many as 25% of Canadians between the ages of 15 and 18 are working on a part-time basis. According to the Ontario Farm Safety Association, which employs many of these young people, 119 children died in farm accidents between 1977 and 1993. According to the Industrial Accident Prevention Association—Ontario, workers between the ages of 15 and 25 account for an injury rate 35% higher than any other tax bracket. Tragically, in 1997 and 1998, 24 young Ontarians lost their lives in the workplace. In 1999, five young people have died on the job already. It's tragic that these young people are the victims of workplace accidents and death.

It's tragic that since 1995, there have been at least nine inquests conducted into such deaths, and my colleague has referred to the tragic death of 19-year-old Sean Kells. Sean Kells's father was quoted as saying: "Sean didn't know he was handling dangerous chemicals. He had received no training and he wasn't wearing proper protective equipment. His death was no accident—it was a killing," a killing because of the lack of enforcement of workplace health and safety regulations, a killing because of the lack of awareness on the part of young workers of the precautions that they need to take to ensure their safety in the workplace.

My colleague, in speaking to this bill, said that his bill was in large measure in honour of Sean Kells. Quite clearly, this bill is put forward in order to ensure that there are fewer reasons to mourn the deaths of young victims of workplace accidents.

I want to, again, recognize the importance of bringing this bill forward and of receiving support from all members of the Legislature today because, as my colleague has noted, there is no province-wide coordination of health and safety programs in our high school curriculum, and I say there's unlikely to be coordination as the government is going through a widespread review of high school curriculum. This is not likely to be a high priority.

There are models that could be readily adopted—as my colleague from Sudbury has indicated, a model developed by District 6 in Sudbury—so it wouldn't be an onerous task to provide a curriculum which could be readily introduced into the high school curriculum and would provide coordination of workplace education in our high schools.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward this bill. I fully support it and I urge all members of the Legislature to support it, recognizing the intent and value of its passage.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me join in with those who are paying tribute to the member for introducing this bill, and I join with that. Obviously

it's a matter that he cares about deeply and has taken the time to use one of the rare opportunities we get to raise issues in this place to bring attention to the issue of health and safety in the workplace, and in this particular instance a clearer focus on young people.

I'd like to begin my remarks with regard to this by referring to an article in one of the local weekly papers in my region. It's the *Flamborough Review*. The article is written by Arend Kersten and it begins with a quote: "I'm not a professional speaker, I'm just a dad. But I'm a proud dad." Those are the words of Robert Ellis, and he's speaking of the death of his son, David Ellis, who was just 18 years old and on the second day of his job he didn't come home. He died in that workplace.

I think we owe a lot to Mr Ellis, who was able to overcome this terrible personal tragedy and tried to bring something, if it's possible, positive out of it by going around and speaking at the schools. This article is referring to a speech he was giving to the Waterdown District High School and he says: "We are a close family and we have a close relationship with God ... but we miss David desperately."

Mr Kersten goes on to point out in his article that "David Ellis also demonstrated a real love for those less fortunate, helping to peel potatoes for hours at an inner-city mission and providing food to the hungry and homeless in Hamilton out of the back of a truck. 'David didn't speak a lot,' Robert Ellis said. "He just put his love into action."

The article closes by saying, "With summer approaching, Robert Ellis pleaded with the students to educate themselves and speak with others about workplace safety so that the tragedy his family has experienced won't be repeated."

I also want to point out that local 1005, the United Steelworkers of America, much like the Steelworkers in the Thunder Bay area, have also taken it upon themselves to do the job that this government won't do, which is to educate the young people directly as to what their rights are and what the risks are for them when they go into the workplace. They do that at their own expense, their own time, their own initiative, and it's really well received by the students because it's information they didn't know. I don't imagine that there's one student who doesn't see himself or herself as a possible David Ellis or Sean Kells when hearing these stories.

I'm going to read from a letter that was sent less than two months ago to the new Minister of Labour from Wayne Samuelson, the newly re-elected president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. I only have a couple of minutes, so I'm only going to read it in part but it starts out:

"Dear Minister:

"It was with dismay that I read of the death of yet another young worker—a 16-year-old boy crushed to death on September 15 in a dough-making machine. On June 25, 1999, I wrote to you raising concerns regarding the ministry's role in stopping print and radio ads, which were part of a health and safety awareness campaign

directed at young workers. These ads were to include information about David Ellis, a young man who was killed inside a commercial dough-making machine. The ministry prevented this information from going public over concerns that it could have an impact on a future prosecution of the case. Now just a few days ago, Ivan Golyashov, a 16-year-old youth, was killed in a similar machine under similar circumstances.

"But this is not the first time that your ministry has stopped advertisements directed at informing young workers about health and safety in the workplace. In May of 1995, the former Workplace Health and Safety Agency launched an awareness campaign designed to educate young people about the dangers they face at work."

1150

I want to stop there momentarily. I don't want to make a big deal of this and I won't to belabour it or take away from what the member is doing, but I feel it's important that it be on the record that in 1995 the Liberal Party did indeed run on a platform of disbanding the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, an action the government ultimately took, and to recognize that that agency had 50% representatives from workers on that board and that part of their mandate was to educate. So both the government and the Liberals were in favour of killing the very agency that carried out the mandate of the bill that's before us. That's the last I'll say on that in the context of my remarks about this bill.

"The campaign included public service announcements on radio and television, print advertisements and billboards. The campaign centred around Sean Kells, a 19-year-old youth who was killed in a workplace chemical explosion. This campaign was to include paid television advertisements. Unfortunately, an election"—by the way, that was all during the term of the NDP government—"was held in the middle of this campaign and a new government elected." That would be the Mike Harris government. "The Ministry of Labour directed that these paid television ads be cancelled just a day or two before they were to be aired.

"We will never know how many injuries or deaths could have been prevented if these training programs and advertising campaigns were permitted to continue as designed. Perhaps young Ivan would be alive today if his co-worker had been properly trained or even if last summer's campaign had been permitted to proceed as intended."

I think we need to recognize that every October 28, which is the International Day of Mourning, tens of thousands of workers all across Ontario, hundreds of thousands and literally millions around the world mourn and pay tribute to those who have died in the workplace and commit themselves to ensuring that rights and laws are put in place to protect the living.

The fact that Karl Crevar, who is the president of the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups and a Hamilton resident, is here speaks to the importance all of us place on workplace health and safety. The only ones

who don't seem to get the message, unfortunately, are those who could do something about it and that would be the Harris government. I hope the backbenchers here will support this bill in the interests of all our children.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'm very pleased to support my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North on a very clear and wise proposal that he has come up with. Having been the labour critic and sat through all the hearings on the passage of Bill 99, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, believe me, I'm more than well aware of the extent and the nature and the importance of health and safety in the workplace and the training that is required.

I also would like to point out, from the Ottawa and District Injured Workers Group, that on behalf of the executive, Doug Perrault sent in a supportive letter and I'm very pleased to be able to share with him my sentiments as well.

I'm told that over 25% of students—this is just high school students—are working part-time these days, some in more than one part-time job. This number is increasing all the time. Students work to help support their families and to support themselves, and of course they are vulnerable in the workplace because they're often keen and they do what's asked of them, and it's often their first experience and they also don't know their rights, understandably, including the right to say no to an unsafe workplace.

Because as part-time and seasonal workers they're often not properly trained on safety issues, and I think we all know that, and because as youth they often believe that they are invincible, certain things happen. Students also work under the table for the same reasons, where they have no protection.

Although I commend the government for having a young workers' awareness site on the Web, I'd like to point out that many students do not have access to computers or to the Web, especially those in many of our rural communities. Furthermore, are they likely to go to the Ministry of Labour in the first place as high school students? I would think probably not. That is why it's important to have a universal program in all high schools.

Every day 25 workers are injured on the job in Ontario, I'm told; over 8,000 injuries a year. Over the last three years, 25 young Ontarians have lost their lives and that has been cited already with some specific examples.

I'd like to share an experience of one of my staff who two nights ago dropped into a retail store on Yonge Street. Much of the stock was stored above reach but the perky seasonal sales staff were there to help. They are trained to fetch from up above or down below or in the basement stockroom. She asked to see an area rug and the part-time student willingly climbed up on a store ladder to fetch it for her. While on the ladder she was required to pull out rugs from beneath the one she wanted to see, while precariously balancing herself, with the other four rugs on her left arm, until she fetched the one she wanted. You can see how this is a situation of precariousness.

In casual conversation she learned that she's often required to do this, to use the ladder to get stock for other customers, because there isn't enough floor space to display all the merchandise. She further learned that she's a part-time student, aged 17. She has not had any workplace safety training, either at work or at school. It never occurred to her that balancing herself while balancing heavy stock could cause her to lose her balance and have a nasty fall.

I note that the minimum age for window cleaning in Ontario is 18 years of age, but this isn't true in many workplaces. There are lots of youngsters who are working in fast-food outlets, who are slicing deli meats, who are working with tools and devices that are potentially injurious to them.

I think the recommendation from my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North is a sound one. I think it would go a long way to being very supportive of helping young people in particular become aware of the cautions that are required in a workplace environment. Therefore, I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has up to two minutes to reply.

Mr Gravelle: I want to thank all my colleagues in the House for responding to my private member's bill, particularly the members for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Sudbury, Ottawa Centre, Sault Ste Marie and Hamilton West, but if I may, I'd like to spend the bulk of the time I have left responding to the government members who spoke on this bill.

What I will say is that I certainly hope this is truly private members' hour, that the recommendations of the two members there are not simply government recommendations and policy being put forward.

I think what has become compellingly clear to those of us who worked so hard on putting this legislation together is that there are many programs out there across the province. Certainly the members for Hamilton West and Sudbury talked about the United Steelworkers and their involvement in the schools. The reason they are working so hard to get into the schools is because we do not have that coordinated policy across the province.

What we were able to identify in the work I did with Ross Singleton and Steve Mantis and the others in Thunder Bay's Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups was that we needed a coordinating body, which the health and safety educational council would truly be, to coordinate all the programs, to do an inventory of it to define which ones were working and to make recommendations as to what should be in the schools. We recognize that it's in the core curriculum of the high schools, but the problem is they don't know how to get it into the schools.

It's very frustrating to listen to the two government members who were speaking in opposition to this, because we know that what is needed is to continue to fight the battle, to find a way to continue to reduce or eliminate accidents and fatalities in the workplace. The health and safety educational council is one we worked on very carefully to see that it would work. We got

support from all those across the province who were involved in workplace safety. I think the government members should be very careful here because to not allow full province-wide implementation would be something they'd be very sorry for. I still ask the government members to support this legislation. It will help in our battle against workplace accidents and fatalities.

The Acting Speaker: The time for debating ballot item number 8 is now complete.

GREAT LAKES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA PROTECTION ENVIRONNEMENTALE DES GRANDS LACS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will move to ballot item number 7.

Mr Ouellette has moved second reading of Bill 15, An Act to regulate the discharge of ballast water in the Great Lakes. Shall the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I'd like to refer the bill to the standing committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a majority in favour of general government? Agreed.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LES PROGRAMMES DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ POUR ÉTUDIANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Ballot item number 8.

Mr Gravelle has moved second reading of Bill 10, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students. Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please rise.

Nays

Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Beaubien, Marcel
Clark, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Brenda
Gilchrist, Steve

Gill, Raminder
Hastings, John
Klees, Frank
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill

Mushinski, Marilyn
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Stewart, R. Gary
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 35; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare this motion carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill is referred to committee of the whole House.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Mr Speaker, can I have the bill referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy?

The Acting Speaker: Justice and social policy? Agreed.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair. The House will resume at 1:30 pm.

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CYRIL BOLLERS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Recently there has been a lot of talk about our youth, keeping our communities safe and taking action on youth crime. The connotation: Youth are bad.

Youth don't have exclusive rights to acts of violence or crime. In fact, in my visits to the schools on Fridays, which I have done for the last 14 years, I'm inspired really by the activities young people are engaged in to promote social responsibility.

Just two weeks ago I had the honour of meeting the 1999 YMCA Peace Medallion recipient, Cyril Bollers, a young person working hard to break the cycle of violence. Cyril Bollers, as an avid volunteer, karate instructor and dedicated fundraiser with the United Way campaign, recognized that youth can participate in the resolution of their own disputes as the key to answering the questions of violence and conflict in our city. He initiated a training program called Prevention Management of Aggressive Behaviour. The program uses interactive personal growth and development techniques that help young people manage uncontrollable behaviour without resorting to physical violence and aggression. Bollers's program is a great success.

I stand very proud of our young people in Ontario and I hope that our government and the members of Parliament will all recognize and salute those wonderful people of our province.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bountrogianni, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce

DeFaria, Carl
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
Mazzilli, Frank

McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
O'Toole, John
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

THORNWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): It is with pleasure that I rise today to recognize the efforts of teachers and students at Thornwood Public School in my riding of Mississauga East.

Thornwood Public School recently received \$2,000 from the Canada Trust Friends of the Environment Foundation to establish a green school program. This exceptional program gives students hands-on experience in planting seeds, labelling plants and caring for them as they grow in the school. Students are also learning about plant species and their environmental benefits.

Because teachers have volunteered to care for the plants over the summer, a new outdoor garden will be established at the school in the spring of the year 2000, using the plants the students have grown.

This is a wonderful project. The environment is the most previous commodity of our new millennium. I applaud the many people who have dedicated their time and energy to this project. Great work, students and teachers at Thornwood Public. Keep up the good work. Hands-on learning is as important a method of learning as any other method. On behalf of the parents and residents of Mississauga, I congratulate all of you for this excellent initiative.

PARENT AIDE PROGRAM

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): As a result of ministry guidelines and directives, the Frontenac Children's Aid Society will be forced to fire nine members of their highly successful parent aide program, a program that has operated for over 15 years. These support workers are the individuals who work frontline with families in need. They work with the parents of children to give them the necessary life skills and assistance they require. They teach parenting skills and provide much-needed stability.

I have received numerous telephone calls, urgent pleas from parent aides, from teachers, from individuals who have benefited from the program.

We all know that the caseloads of CAS workers is so heavy they do not often have the time to give the personal care and teach prevention to individual families. Removing parent aides from the homes of these children at risk is jeopardizing their safety and chance for a positive life and healthy relationship with their family.

No blame should be attached to the CAS, for they are placed in the horrible position of choosing between different effective programming because of lack of funds.

Ministry officials themselves confirmed this morning at our public accounts committee hearings that CASs are struggling to keep up because of more services, more children at risk and new child protection reporting requirements.

I beg the Minister of Community and Social Services to increase the funding to CASs so that the parent aide programs in Kingston and elsewhere will continue for the

benefits of the children, their parents and all of us in society.

CAMBRIDGE HORNETS HOCKEY CLUB

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): It's my pleasure to stand in the House today to acknowledge the launch of a new sports team in Ontario. After a 12-year hiatus from Ontario hockey, sports fans will be pleased to hear that the Cambridge Hornets Hockey Club has been re-assembled.

The Cambridge Hornets began their season on October 1, 1999, playing against the Aylmer Hornets at Preston Memorial Auditorium. They've been playing to nearly sold-out crowds for the last eight weeks.

Area families and many in this Legislature will remember the Hornets as the former Allen Cup champions back in 1982.

This hockey club is steeped in Waterloo region tradition, dating back to their original debut in 1963 in the Galt Arena Gardens.

I would like to congratulate the many volunteers who have worked so hard to bring back senior A hockey to Cambridge.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment and determination of my good friends president Jim MacDonald, Gord Chaplin, the players and the entire Cambridge Hornets executive. On behalf of Cambridge families and Hornets fans everywhere, we appreciate your efforts and we look forward to many successful seasons ahead.

1340

LANDFILL

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Day after day we're reminded in this House that when it comes to the environment in Ontario, those who want to destroy it have no better friend than the Minister of the Environment himself.

Tuesday night, I joined some 250 residents of the area who met in clear opposition to any expansion of the Richmond Township megadump site. The minister should be aware that there was determination in that room, determination to fight this proposed expansion, determination to do what their Minister of the Environment is unwilling to do, and that is to say no to big business, who are more concerned with profit than with the health and safety of my constituents.

Why should residents of my riding be expected to be a dumping ground for all those communities that are unable to take care of their own waste? Not only has the minister been silent on the issue, he has not provided one cent to the residents' group that wishes to conduct independent studies to determine the effect of this dump on their environment.

It's time for you as Minister of the Environment to put the interests and concerns of Ontario residents ahead of the financial interests of your business friends.

I travel through the Don Valley most evenings on my way home, and I marvel that a city the size of Toronto has been able to protect the Don Valley from being used as a dump site by the Americans. My constituents want the same protection against this proposed megadump.

The Minister of the Environment's silence and refusal to reply to letters on this issue clearly show that when it comes to environmental concerns in Ontario, big business has no better friend than Ontario's Minister of the Environment.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This morning Rosario Marchese and I were at two high-rise buildings: 103 and 105 West Lodge Avenue. Between these two buildings, owned by the same slumlord, there are 720 units, ranging from one-room bachelors to multi-bedroom apartments with families. The tenants there range from young people and young families to senior citizens.

What we saw was criminal. We saw one apartment in which the toilet was leaking waste water into the bathroom downstairs. A young mother and her two-month-old baby have had to endure that for two years. No response from the slumlord owner.

In another apartment, the stove had but one burner working. The elements in the oven don't work and the burners on top didn't work. As a result of a complaint to the landlord a month ago, the tenant and his family face eviction.

In another, the holes through the plaster and lathwork provide easy access for the hordes of cockroaches and rodents that invade this woman's kitchen on a daily basis.

But the biggest insult was that these tenants showed me rent-increase notices of 30 to 50 %. These tenants, 720 families, are being forced into homelessness by this government's collaboration with greedy slumlords and this government's abandonment of any affordable housing policy.

NESTLÉ JOB TRAINING PROGRAM

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise today to bring your attention to a job-training success story in my riding.

The Nestlé Company in Trenton, employing slightly under 300 people, is well known for its chocolate, coffee and ice cream. It is also active in the food service industry. I, along with the mayor of Quinte West, His Worship Jack Arthur, toured the plant last week and was mightily impressed.

As Nestlé continues to improve its products and compete in the global marketplace, there emerges a need for a better-skilled workforce. The Ontario government has assisted Nestlé, enabling them to provide input and access to specialized food and beverage training from Loyalist College. Nestlé recently hired 10 people who were trained for one month in the Loyalist program.

The end result has been skilled graduates who are trained in health and safety, food safety and team building, who know how to work in the Nestlé environment. This qualified workforce contributes to increased productivity as well as an immediate \$10,000 saving in training costs. Savings are reinvested in the facility and its people, positioning this company for further and anticipated growth in mid-2000.

HÔTEL-DIEU GRACE HOSPITAL

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Yesterday the board of directors of Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor reported that their earlier deficit figure was off by about a million dollars, and our hospital is now forecasting a \$9-million deficit by the end of this fiscal year.

We have raised this issue repeatedly with the Minister of Health, not only with regard to Windsor hospitals but indeed hospitals throughout the province. What's more troubling is how the hospital intends to deal with the deficit. Let me quote a senior official at the hospital regarding the cost of surgical supplies such as pace-makers and spinal implants:

"We are asking that there be a closer review of spending at the departmental level. For example, if a doctor has a choice between two devices for a patient, with one device more expensive, both the patient's needs and the hospital's ability to pay should be considered."

What that means is that patients in these hospitals—and these devices must be paid for out of the hospital's operating accounts—will not get the highest quality of care available. I would predict that, with these continued deficits, the problem will worsen. It's a shame the minister won't respond to these issues.

DALTON McGUINTY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to speak today about leadership.

The Ontario Liberal Party has been without an effective leader for so long they forget what true leadership really is. So, in an effort to keep his own job, it is painfully obvious that Dalton McGuinty has launched a smear campaign against the only truly effective leader he knows, Mike Harris.

I have newspaper articles from across the province, written after the Liberals held their own recent mini-leadership convention in Ottawa.

From central Ontario, in the Welland Tribune: "Ever hear of the gang that couldn't shoot straight? Welcome to the Ontario Liberal Party and their so-called leader, Dalton McGuinty. McGuinty may be a good, decent man, but a leader he's not."

From eastern Ontario, in the Kingston Whig-Standard: "Some people dream of winning the lottery—Dalton McGuinty dreams of scandal and political devastation striking the Conservatives to send him to power."

In the Toronto Sun: "It doesn't matter if the Tories are actually arrogant and corrupt—the Liberals will just keep

repeating that mantra in the hopes of fooling the electorate.”

From this so-called leader's own hometown, in the Ottawa Citizen: “McGuinty's problem is the same one he had in the election. He is a leader without compelling ideas of his own. As such, he's left with nothing but cheap attacks on the government voters choose.”

Mr McGuinty, I too believe that you are a good and decent man, but you are not a leader. Stop the mindless attacks and start coming up with some specific and workable ideas. Nobody in this House believes your cries of arrogance and corruption, and now it's obvious the rest of Ontario doesn't believe them either.

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 1998-99.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Mr Kennedy from the standing committee on estimates, reported the following resolution:

“Resolved: That supply in the following amounts and to defray the expenses of the following ministries be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000:

“Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Ministry administration, \$29,025,400; local government—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Dispense? Dispense.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN ON SCHOOL BUSES ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999

SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS DANS LES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en vue de protéger les enfants lorsqu'ils sont dans des autobus scolaires.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member, for a short explanation.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): This bill addresses a long-standing need to protect Ontario school children. It would provide a conviction mechanism for a vehicle that illegally passes a school bus with its red warning lights flashing.

1350

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to move motions with regard to the standing committee on general government for the purpose of selecting an Environmental Commissioner; and the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of selecting an Ombudsman. I seek unanimous consent to move this motion without notice.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that the standing committee on general government, for the purpose of selecting an Environmental Commissioner, and the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, for the purpose of selecting an Ombudsman, may at the call of the Chair sit outside their regularly scheduled meeting times between Monday, December 6, 1999, and Thursday, December 16, 1999.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITEURS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Monsieur le Président, aujourd'hui j'ai l'honneur de présenter deux étudiants de ma circonscription qui ont participé à notre programme éducatif qui a débuté en 1995. Ces deux étudiants de l'école Le Pavillon la Croisée d'Embrun du Conseil des écoles catholiques de l'est ontarien sont Myriam Perras et Jonathan Boulrice, et ils ont obtenu la meilleure note d'un examen concernant le processus de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Une fois de plus, je remercie ces élèves pour leur effort.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order, but I'm sure all the members join in welcoming the two fine students.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I believe I have unanimous consent for a representative for each party to speak five minutes on the International Day of Disabled Persons.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: Tomorrow, December 3, is the United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons. This important event provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon issues that affect all of us. It provides us with an opportunity to reflect upon the progress that has been made in communities across the province and to reflect upon our shared goals of a barrier-free Ontario.

I believe that all members of the House share my goals for an Ontario where opportunities are available to all members of society. We share a goal of an Ontario where all of us have the opportunity to be productive members of our community, to share in the benefits of a growing economy and to participate in the social and cultural life of our province.

Tomorrow we will mark the achievements of Ontarians with disabilities and the achievements of persons with disabilities in every part of the globe. Their achievements are many. Through personal endeavour, men, women and young people with disabilities have overcome tremendous barriers and remind us what the world potentially really means. They have championed change and made advances that have benefited all of us and they have inspired us through acts of generosity, public spirit and athletic achievement.

As a government and as members of this House, we have a responsibility to build on their achievements. We are moving forward, and there is a great deal more that needs to be done. This government has announced more than \$500 million in initiatives that promote accessibility and create new opportunities. We have enhanced community living and independent living opportunities for people of all ages. We have made enhancements to education that are assisting students with disabilities from preschool right through a transition to post-secondary education. We've also created a new income support and employment program that better meets the needs of people with disabilities. We introduced a range of health initiatives designed to improve care, provide earlier interventions and improve outcomes following serious injuries.

New initiatives are improving accessibility by supporting building and motor vehicle modifications. We are fostering new partnerships and strategic alliances between business and the not-for-profit and broader public sectors. And we have introduced tax measures to assist people with disabilities and offset costs to employers of accommodating employees with disabilities.

I'm very proud that this government was the first in Canada and the only government in the history of Ontario to commit to disability legislation. Just last week in the House we once again renewed that commitment. We look forward to working together with all members of the Legislature and with all of those who share our responsibility for making Ontario more accessible and creating opportunities for all members of our society.

I am sure that all members of the House will join me in celebrating United Nations International Day of Disabled Persons.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Tomorrow the United Nations recognizes the International Day of Disabled Persons. It is a day that is intended to further the integration of persons with disabilities into society.

I'm very proud to add my voice to those praising the accomplishments of persons with disabilities; 1999 has been a banner year for many persons with disabilities. This includes the successful athletes at the Ontario Special Olympics and Paraplegic Games and persons with disabilities who have achieved the greatest heights in law, medicine, academics and administration. It also includes the person with a mental handicap who succeeds in getting their first job. It includes the elderly man with fading vision who learns Braille to keep alive his love of reading. It includes every Ontarian with a disability who has looked at a barrier and overcome it.

There is a long way to go, though, Madam Minister, to achieve the goal of a barrier-free Ontario. There is much more that can be done, and the members of this Legislature can help achieve that goal.

Two years from now, when this Legislature again marks this important occasion, we will have hopefully enacted a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Such legislation will go much further towards the goal of integrating persons with disabilities into society. The model legislation from the United States has been universally praised for opening doors for Americans with disabilities, both figuratively and literally. Now it is our turn.

In addition, we must encourage new supportive housing initiatives that are accessible, affordable and plentiful. We must enhance the funding to the special services at home program for those families who are caring for their children with disabilities.

Tomorrow, I would ask my fellow members of the Legislature to consider what each of us can do to address the barriers faced by persons with disabilities in our ridings. If a constituent in a wheelchair came to visit your office, would they be able to enter the door? If one of us was to hire a person with a disability on our staff, as my seatmate has done, would the Legislature offer the necessary services to integrate that person into Queen's Park? If a person with limited sight wanted to receive one of our householders, would they be able to get one in Braille or large print?

Much more, too, needs to be done to improve the accessibility to this building. Over \$300,000 was spent this past summer on this very Legislature, but it was cosmetic in nature. It did nothing to improve access for persons with disabilities to become part of and to watch the decision-making process of this province.

It is a constant learning process to identify and remove the steep obstacles to employment, education, transportation and housing that persons with disabilities face, but it

is well worth it to integrate a million and a half of our friends, constituents and, yes, voters.

In conclusion, I would like to recognize the accomplishments of countless organizations helping those with disabilities. If I were to start naming all those wonderful groups and people by name, we would be here until next year's International Day of Disabled Persons. However, they should each receive our support and best wishes, from the front-line service providers to those committed lobbyists and advocates who struggle on behalf of persons with disabilities.

Members of the Legislature, let us mark this day and use it as a day to turn the page on the past injustice we have done to persons with disabilities. Let's turn that page. Let's look towards the future, to doing everything we can to remove those barriers to persons with disabilities.

1400

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Tomorrow is the International Day of Disabled Persons. I'm pleased to speak to this very important day on behalf of the NDP caucus.

First, I want to acknowledge the tremendous work done by people with disabilities in this province, and right now especially by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act committee, in bringing their concerns to the front of the public consciousness. Their drive, determination and hard work is an example to us all.

On this very important day, I want to share with the members of this Legislature what real people with disabilities face in Ontario right now. I want to give some insight into why we need a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act on the books and enforced right now. You see, real people with disabilities live in a province full of barriers.

Offices for government services have rooms and hallways that do not have enough room for a person using a wheelchair or a scooter.

Limited availability of Braille and other alternate formats for print information creates barriers for people who are blind or have visual impairments or other print disabilities.

People often encounter doors too heavy to handle.

Traffic lights do not allow sufficient time for people who walk slowly or who use crutches or wheelchairs to cross the street.

Landlords are often not aware of how to interact appropriately with visually impaired tenants or others with print disabilities.

Many of our school playgrounds and other school buildings are inaccessible to children with disabilities.

Many people with disabilities are not eligible for use of paratransit systems.

The list does go on and on. Has this government made it easier or harder for persons with disabilities to cope with this province so full of barriers? If you are a single mom with a child with a disability and you are on welfare, you have lost over 20% of your income thanks to this government. Did your disabled child lose 20% of

his or her need for three meals a day? I don't think so. You have fewer hospitals to go to for medical treatment. You have fewer Human Rights Commission offices to go to if you want to complain about the barriers you face.

The Ontario disability support program is in a state of chaos. You don't have any legislation that protects your rights and provides you with equal opportunity because this government got rid of the NDP's Employment Equity Act, replaced it with nothing, told people to go to the Human Rights Commission and now they've cut that once again. You don't have the transportation accessibility programs the NDP government put in place. They're gone as well.

You have a new minister responsible for people with disabilities every couple of years to make promises and then deliver nothing. To top it off, you have a government that supports a resolution to move forward, once again, with a new Ontarians with Disabilities Act and then the next day starts to make excuses about time frames. This from a government that can turn around record numbers of pieces of legislation overnight, as we see daily in this House. The fact is, this government has continued to treat persons with disabilities like second-class citizens.

Tomorrow is a very important day. We have an opportunity today to ask the government once again to move forward on this important legislation. I hope they will, for once, do more than pay lip service to the 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities and give their issues the priority they deserve.

Polls show that the citizens of Ontario support moving forward with a new Ontarians with Disabilities Act, and I'm disappointed that on this important day the minister didn't take the opportunity to stand and give us some information and news about where they are in the process of moving forward on this important act. I had hoped she would do that today.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I raise a point of order which may involve at some point some significant debate, but I would first like to refer it to you for your very serious consideration. It's a matter which has come before the Legislature in the past and it has to do both with the presentation of omnibus bills and the presentation of bills without sufficient notice.

I'm not going to engage in lengthy debate this afternoon, but I want to just make reference to two precedents in other legislative bodies that I think serve as precedents for your consideration of this issue.

One is a statement that was raised by the Speaker of the House of Commons in 1982 in relationship to omnibus bills. He said:

"When another omnibus bill is proposed to the House, it should be scrutinized at first reading when all honourable members would be given an opportunity to express their views and the Chair could express its view as to

whether the bill goes too far or is acceptable from a procedural point of view."

You will be aware, Mr Speaker, that this morning we learned that Bill 23 is to be presented for first reading debate in the House this afternoon. We did not learn that until this morning. Bill 23, although a relatively small bill, constitutes an omnibus bill in that it relates to three very different pieces of legislation and addresses two very substantively different issues. Therefore, it constitutes an omnibus bill.

The second issue I'd like to raise is to quote from Beauchesne when he says:

"The principles of Canadian parliamentary law are:

"To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence of tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every member to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time; to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken upon sudden impulse."

Mr Speaker, I would like you to consider what has become something of a practice in this House of presenting both omnibus bills which address more than one piece of legislation within the bill, and even more importantly, substantively different issues within the same bill, and secondly, the presentation of that kind of bill essentially without notice.

This bill, Bill 23, was tabled in the House only two days ago, was printed only yesterday and called for first reading this morning. Already I've had letters from two professional associations that have become aware that the bill may relate to their professions, but they haven't even had an opportunity to see the bill, let alone provide any input to first reading of the bill.

I will leave it at that. I know the issue came before the House when Bill 26 was presented, the original sweeping omnibus bill. I know the ruling of Speaker McLean at the time was not to consider a division of the bill, but I believe there are serious points of order that need to be considered in this Legislature and, as a new Speaker, I would ask you to consider these issues very seriously and report to the House.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for raising the point of order. We'll get through question period and then I will have a ruling on that.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Very briefly, simply as a bit of a longer-time observer of bills coming before this House, I wish to express a similar concern about the piece of legislation that the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has brought to your attention.

What is increasingly happening with bills—this is not necessarily a problem of individuals but of the whole House—is that bills become either supportable or not supportable based on how many hostages they have inside them; that is, there may be something that's entirely different within a bill, and a bill that would normally be supportable and might get through the House

very quickly doesn't get through the House quickly and becomes a matter of rancour because there are additional components to it.

The point of order that we deal with is, how different are those points? The bill to which Mrs McLeod has made reference, if I look at an instance, is one which I could support very much in terms of the right to sue cigarette-making companies, tobacco companies. Yet another component which gives tremendous powers to the Minister of Health with regard to local hospitals—I can't support that. You can see that these are diametrically opposed pieces of legislation contained within one, and I certainly want to commend the member for Fort William for raising it and endorse that particular position.

1410

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to give second and third reading to parts I and II of Bill 23 right now. Those are the parts of the bill that deal with the government's ability to sue tobacco companies. I know how important that is to the government, and I would hope we're prepared to give it second and third reading right now, parts I and II of Bill 23. Agreed?

The Speaker: Just so you know, the member would need to have a motion to sever parts I and II and then be able to proceed.

Mr Duncan: I am seeking unanimous consent to present a motion that would sever parts I and II of Bill 23 and then we would give second and third reading to them right now.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? All in favour? I'm afraid I heard a no.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the current Minister of Municipal Affairs. Minister, you held a press conference this morning at 10 o'clock and at that time you trotted on down to the city of Toronto and suggested to them, in what can only be the most arrogant of ways, that they should have 54 hours to decide how they're going to govern the city of Toronto, a \$6-billion organization. You trotted down there this morning and said, "Saturday, at 5 o'clock, that's how much time you have to decide how you are going to govern yourselves."

Minister, please tell the House that that is either incompetent or that is sheer arrogance. You cannot possibly be serious about allowing a city the size of Toronto, a \$6-billion organization, 54 hours to decide how they will govern themselves, a city of 2.2 million people.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd be

happy to correct the record, because the characterization of the honourable member is incorrect. What I said this morning, and I'd be happy to repeat it for the benefit of members of this House, is simply that we are giving the city of Toronto, and indeed any citizens in Toronto, an opportunity to help us draft the bill. I do have a deadline, the deadline internally is Saturday at 5 o'clock, so that we can draft a bill in clear conscience for this House to debate. I'm sure if you were in government you wouldn't give them that opportunity to help draft a bill before it's even presented to the Legislature.

Of course, after the bill is presented, Mayor Lastman, all the city councillors and all the citizens of Toronto have the first reading of the bill, they have the second reading of the bill, they have the third reading of the bill to offer their advice as well. Internally, I have to have a deadline; externally, they have all of those opportunities, which are more opportunities than you'd every give them, I'm quite sure.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take a seat. Order. Was the minister finished?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mrs Papatello: We want to know where my friend Tony went. Where is Minister Tony Clement? All we have is a shell of a man left. This is the same man that used to stand on the street corner and talk about direct democracy, talk about power to the people, give the people a chance to have their say. This is the same Tony. We want to know, where did Tony go? Where is that man you've got the gall to trot down to the city of Toronto and say 54 hours for a \$6-billion organization governing 2.2 million people in that city? This is the man who thumped on about direct democracy, and now you've got the nerve to walk on down to the city of Toronto in that manner? All we want to know is, where did the real Tony Clement go?

Hon Mr Clement: I find it a bit rich for the honourable member, who filibustered me personally for six months—when I wanted direct democracy, she was against it, or at least her leader was; perhaps she was directed by her leader, I don't know.

This has been an issue of public debate in Toronto for the last two and a half years. We are offering—

Interjections.

The Speaker: I cannot hear the answer from the minister. I would tell all the members—member for Windsor West, please come to order.

Hon Mr Clement: We are offering the citizens of Toronto, city council and Mayor Lastman an opportunity to affect the bill before it is even introduced. Upon its introduction they have the first reading, they have the second reading, they have the third reading to be involved in public consultation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Order, please.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member talks about mandates. Another thing that we're proud of on

this side of the House is the mandate from the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario to stand up for the taxpayer, to ensure the taxpayer gets a break, to ensure there are clear lines of responsibility and accountability from the politicians. That's the mandate we got and that's the mandate we are proud of.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Minister, in the last election most of your members ran on the mandate that the megacity was working so well. I just want to straighten out the record on that.

As a citizen of Toronto, a person who served on Metro council and York council, I really find it repugnant the way you're treating the people of Toronto. I know you have contempt for local officials; we know that. But you are saying to the people of Toronto, "You have until sundown on Saturday to decide how your city is governed." I think that's a total affront to the people of Toronto, in light of the fact that just last week we buried Mayor Lamport, who would be in here going off the deep end if he were to hear what you're doing.

How can you stand there and say you're going to have input from the citizens of Toronto, you're going to have input from council, within this deadline you've put to them? I find that an abuse of power, an abuse of the people of Toronto. I'm telling you on behalf of my constituents, you have no right to do that. You and your government had better stop doing it, because we are citizens, we are taxpayers—

The Speaker: The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Clement: I want to quote from Mayor Lastman yesterday on radio. Mayor Lastman said, "If they want to cut it to 44 and they want us to cut to 44"—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. We will not continue if I cannot hear the question. The clock will go down for the entire hour if I am not able to hear the minister. I'm warning everyone, please come to order so I can hear the answers.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me quote from Mayor Lastman: "We've got to do what's best for these people, the citizens of the city of Toronto. If they want to cut it to 44 and they want us to cut it to 44, we'll do it, but let us do it."

We are giving the city of Toronto, the mayor of Toronto, the council of Toronto, the opportunity to have input even before the legislation is introduced. Then they get additional input on first, second and third reading, as is the parliamentary practice in this democracy in the province of Ontario. We are giving them ample opportunity. It's more opportunity than they would give, I'm sure, but we are proud of the opportunity to give the citizens of Toronto their say to have lower taxes and a more accountable government.

1420

AGRICULTURAL OFFICES

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. In 1888, that ministry was created here in Ontario to help farmers produce the most productive industry in North America. A large part of that was field offices found across Ontario to help farmers do just that. Today we have a \$6-billion industry, the ag industry. It's the second-largest industry in Ontario, and Ontario's agriculture industry is at the top across the nation.

My question for the minister is this: Where in your Blueprint that you ran on did you suggest to farmers that you would be closing over 40 offices, which was announced by your ministry today? Having been in your riding not that long ago, and understanding that farmers were yelling at you from the back of the room, you broke your promise to farmers. Where in the document that you ran on in the last campaign does it say you're closing over 40 field offices?

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I can assure you that our government is committed to the second-largest industry in this province, which generates some 640,000 jobs in our economy.

In the six months that I've been consulting with the members of the agri-food sector, they told me that the ministry needed to be more focused on the things that the industry needed. We no longer could do things the same way they had been done. We had to refocus.

I want to point out that the issue is that we have a commitment to the agriculture and food sector that is second to none. In fact, in this past year the budget for that ministry has gone up some \$40 million. That is our commitment. But we are also obligated to look at the most cost-effective and efficient ways to deliver those services that the farmers are wanting and need. We are proposing to do that by realigning the services as we presently provide them, and we'll provide better and higher-quality services in the areas the farmers and the food sector have told us they want them delivered.

Mrs Papatello: Those field offices are staffed with technical support. There are specialists in those field offices that farmers have come to rely on. When that 500-pound pig is sick in the county of Essex, are you expecting they're going to drag that pig up the 401 all the way to Ridgeway to get the kind of support they used to get right there at home?

I'm suggesting to this minister that you are not listening to the farmers of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Take your seat. Stop the clock. Member for St Catharines, come to order, please. The member for Windsor West.

Mrs Papatello: Minister, I would suggest that every single member in this House understands the importance of agriculture, certainly on this side of the House.

Let me tell this minister that the farmers in his own riding spoke to me. Those farmers said to me that you broke your promise to them. That was before the announcement of the closure of those offices. I want to see how you're going to rationalize to them that the specialists aren't available, that the techno support is gone. How are they going to call a 1-800 number when they're on a farm from morning till night during their season? I want to know exactly what you're going to tell the people who already told this minister themselves at a town hall meeting that you broke your promise to them.

Hon Mr Hardeman: I wish I could agree with the member opposite that everyone in this House understands agriculture and the farmers' problems, but it's obvious from that question that the member opposite has absolutely no idea. I can assure the member that a farmer with a sick hog in Essex county does not take it to the local ag office to see that that hog needs to be looked after. They call their local veterinarian, and the veterinarians, very capable people, look after that hog.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat. Member for Kingston and the Islands, please come to order. Member for Windsor West, please come to order. Minister.

Hon Mr Hardeman: Again I thank you, Mr Speaker.

I do want to assure the member that the realignment of the ministry services will indeed put more expert advice at the disposal of our farmers. So when they call with a problem, they will be able to have it answered because we have the experts on staff to do that. We no longer can be providing the services as they have been provided for 100 years, as the member mentioned. We must provide it in a new and streamlined way. As farming has changed, so the ministry must change.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): Minister, you have betrayed the farmers of Ontario. Last spring you promised more support for farmers. Today you are closing all the ag offices in southwestern Ontario. The minister's memo to staff today said it's his job to steer, not row. Well, if you're not prepared to row, get out of the boat and let in somebody who knows how to do it.

Be warned, Minister: You will be remembered by the farmers of Ontario as the Minister of Agriculture who destroyed that ministry. Will you do the right thing and scrap your decision to close these offices in southwestern Ontario now?

Hon Mr Hardeman: Mr Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take your seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. This is the last warning for the member for Windsor West, and I would ask the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to come to order as well.

Minister of Agriculture.

Hon Mr Hardeman: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I just want to reassure the member opposite that the farmers we have spoken to, the farmers in my riding and the farmers in his riding, which I had the opportunity to visit just a number of weeks ago, have told us in no uncertain terms that they have set priorities as to what they want from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. There are four main areas.

They want strong safety net programs. We can assure the members opposite that they will be not only maintained but will be enhanced to meet those farmers' needs.

"We want environmental stewardship and research and technology transfer." That will be increased.

"We want to expand and diversify the agri-food industry locally and abroad." We are putting the people and programs in place that will do that.

Thank you very much for the question. We look forward to a very successful and efficient Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Mrs Papatello: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'll be registering the necessary paperwork for a late show with that minister on that question.

The Speaker: I thank the member. She should put it with the table.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Trinity-Spadina is ready for a question.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): A question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Minister, I was there this morning at your press conference so I know how you characterized it, and I know that you said what you want is the views of the city of Toronto with respect to your desire to chop them down. You said "By the way, it will be either 22 or 44; it can't be any more than that." You want these views by sundown Saturday. It's quite clear. I would add that this deadline, executed by dictatorial decree, is made worse by the fact that sundown tomorrow is the beginning of Hanukkah. The mayor would normally say when he's confronted by such things, "These guys are nuts." I agree with Mayor Lastman's normal characterization of the way I view your deadline: It's nuts, Minister.

In view of this holiday that comes Friday at sundown, are you going to reconsider your deadline to give them proper time to deal with this issue?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the opportunity to clarify once again that this is an internal deadline. We'd be happy to take the mayor's or any other members of council's or any other citizen of Toronto's views on this matter on first reading, on second reading, on third reading. But I have an obligation to present bills in this House on behalf of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and in order to do so I want to get the views as

soon as possible to give them that extra opportunity that, incidentally, your government hardly ever accorded anyone in your entire term: the opportunity to have their say even before we introduce the legislation.

1430

But I want to tell the honourable member—he was there at the conference, no doubt about that—we have had call after call, communication after communication to my office from the taxpayers of Toronto, who want action, who want justice, who want a better city council for themselves and for the city of Toronto, and we have to oblige them.

Mr Marchese: When you were asked how many people called, you said, "I don't know." You come here and say, "We got calls and we got calls," anonymous, of course, people calling. The only person you called, your only source, is M. Doug Holyday, the city councillor. Anybody who follows city council even a little bit knows that Doug Holyday is so persuasive at council that he usually gets one vote—his own. That's all he gets. Yet you say you're listening to city council. You say that your overnight partnership is meaningful. That's what you said, that you want to do this in partnership with the city. It's a one-night partnership with Mayor Mel and the city of Toronto.

What kind of partnership is it when one side says, "We're putting a gun to your head and you've got to agree with us by sundown on Saturday or else"? Is this your idea of partnership, Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: I mentioned Councillor Holyday. Councillor Jakobek has been outspoken on this issue. There's a councillor named David Miller, by the way, who ran for the NDP in the York South by-election. Do you know David Miller? I know David Miller. He beat me in an election. I thank my lucky stars he did, because I get to serve the people of Ontario. David Miller thinks it's a good idea. If it's good enough for one of the NDP caucus on city council, why isn't it good enough for the honourable member? Certainly, it is not only them. Mayor Lastman again, for the record, "If they want to cut it to 44 and they want to cut us to 44, we'll do it, but let us do it." The mayor is going to get his wish.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Minister, once again your government is showing complete contempt for the people of the city of Toronto and for democracy in this city. You said you wanted a partnership with this city, yet you're giving them just two days to respond to your plan that you've set in stone already. You're forcing municipal politicians once again to spend endless time on your hare-brained schemes instead of things like homelessness, child care and public transit, for example. They'll all be running around looking for a seat to run in, instead of criticizing Queen's Park.

Your two-day partnership is nothing but a one-night stand, and I think we know who's getting screwed here. Is this your idea of a partnership, Mr Minister?

Hon Mr Clement: Again, the characterization is inaccurate. We are asking citizens of Toronto, councillors

in Toronto, the mayor of Toronto to get me their views before we craft the legislation. Then, after the legislation is introduced, if they still want to have their say, they have first, second and third reading. That's our parliamentary practice and tradition, of which we are particularly proud. So the honourable member has got it completely wrong. She talks about the citizenry. Who is speaking for the taxpayer? Who is looking out for the taxpayer?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Minister take his seat. I can't hear when the members are shouting across. I can't hear the answer. I need to hear the answer from the minister. Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: Again, somebody has to look out for the taxpayer here. We are hearing about the need throughout the entire province of Ontario to deliver better services with more accountability, more transparency, doing better for less, giving the taxpayer a break. It's obvious the honourable member isn't sticking up for the taxpayer. I don't know which interest she is sticking up for, but we on this side of the House know which side we're on: on the side of the taxpayer, on the side of the—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up. New question, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: He's a funny guy, this minister.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I've got another question, to the Minister of Education. Students in Ontario will be receiving this booklet, each and every one across Ontario. It's flashy. I've got to tell you, under normal circumstances, if we had a whole lot of money in education, if you hadn't cut it down to the bone, it wouldn't be so bad. But the students of Canterbury High School are outraged by this. They feel it's a slap in the face to spend \$2.5 million on this booklet while their arts program is being cut.

The picture of Mike Harris doesn't bother me. OK, Mike, where are you? Oh, here you are, Mike. It doesn't bother me that he's there, but it's \$2.5 million, and for me frankly it doesn't make any sense. When we don't have money for essentials, you people find money, \$2.5 million, to fund this kind of program, for a luxury like this, to have the Premier's face on this and also the minister. Is this your priority?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): If the honourable member does read the book, he will see that there are some excellent examples of work by students. I certainly agree with my honourable colleagues that that work needed to be shared with people across the province, and students are certainly benefiting from it. As a matter of fact, we're getting calls for more copies of these books because they'd like more copies of these books.

I would also like to remind—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member for Kingston and the Islands, please come to order.

Member for Essex, please come to order. Minister of Education.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said, we're getting requests from schools for more copies of this particular book because they find it very good.

What I would also like to say to the honourable member is that we are spending \$323 million for additional textbook support out there for those schools. Teachers are telling me that they are seeing new textbooks—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Minister, please take a seat.

Member for Kingston and the Islands, this is his last warning.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Government members, order, please.

Hon Mrs Ecker: As I said, \$323 million more out there for textbooks I think is a considerable investment in front-line classroom services and certainly shows the commitment we have to ensuring that our excellent teachers have excellent support.

Mr Marchese: What we have is a high school system and an elementary school system that is being underfunded severely. We have libraries that are underfunded. We're losing our specialty teachers, our special education teachers, our music teachers, and there are cuts to ESL. Schools are selling out to the corporations to get money. We have no money to deal with the resource materials that deal with violence prevention in the schools, yet this minister says, "We're getting requests for more of these books because people love them."

Where are your priorities, Minister? Some \$2.5 million, for this. It's a luxury to have Mike Harris's picture on the front page here, but it's not a luxury for students of Canterbury High School, who are losing their arts program. It's not a luxury for most students to see this book as they're seeing cuts in their high school system. Minister, look at me. Minister, look here. Where are your priorities?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The only "selling out" that happened in this province was when the honourable member's party, when they were government, sold out the taxpayers and the schoolchildren in this province.

When teachers were asking for more supports in classrooms, they were letting school boards build buildings with tinkling fountains and great wonderful supports in them.

We have put \$585 million more into the classroom to help support our teachers; \$323 million for textbooks, because we believe that that's an important support. We are going to continue to spend more in the classroom, where it's going to help our excellent teachers do an excellent job to produce excellent students. That's what the parents of this province want.

1440

POLICE OFFICERS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Today I have a question for the Solicitor General.

Toronto is enduring an epidemic of drug-related murders. No fewer than six murders have taken place in my riding since my election six months ago tomorrow. These murders are being committed with guns, and on streets and in parks where children play.

There are only six drug officers active in two downtown police divisions, home to more than 200,000 people. On Monday in committee, Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman of the Toronto Police Service acknowledged that there are fewer—not more but fewer—police on the streets of Toronto than there were when your government took office in 1995.

What efforts is your government making to reverse the trend towards fewer police on the streets of our capital city?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): I appreciate the question from the member. Clearly, our government feels it's very important to get front-line police officers on the streets. That's really why we've embarked upon a program, I think a very successful one, of investing around \$150 million to get 1,000 net brand-new police officers on the streets of this province. These—

Mr Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Where are they?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I've been asked, "Where are they?" By the end of the year we expect to have over 700 of these officers into the communities. We feel it's very important. That's our commitment to getting more police officers on the street.

I would hope that the various municipalities who fund municipal police services in the province have the same priorities to make sure that we crack down on crime. Certainly we think it's important. That's why we're investing the money. I hope the municipalities do as well.

Mr Smitherman: If this were a hockey game I might compliment you on that deflection, but it's not. It is a matter of life and death. You used the word "successful" but didn't deal with the heart of the matter, which is that there are fewer, not more but fewer, police on the streets of the city of Toronto.

Interjection.

Mr Smitherman: Perhaps not in Etobicoke, which the member from Etobicoke is barking about, but in downtown Toronto that's certainly the issue.

Let's review the facts: There are fewer police protecting the people I represent than there were when your government came to office. Don't take my word for it; listen to Staff Sergeant Kinsman. The police know it, my community certainly knows it and now you know it. I ask you again, what are you doing to put more police on the streets of Toronto?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Let me respond to that in two ways. First of all I'll talk about the police force, which we have direct responsibility for, and we have direct responsibility for funding more police officers on the street. That's the OPP.

Since 1995, there has been a net increase in the number of OPP officers. Having said that, that indicates

how important this is to us to get more police officers on the street. We can only try, through a program, to get more front-line police officers there to show the municipalities, which fund their municipal police services, what we believe the priorities are. It's important to us because we have increased the number of OPP officers.

We have also added 1,000 net brand-new front-line police officers to the streets of this province. They are there.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

An editorial appeared in today's Toronto Sun, and I want to quote from it. It said: "We favour the province's plan to reduce the size of council to 44 members, plus the mayor, from the present 57, plus Mel." They mean, obviously, Mayor Lastman. "In our view, 44 politicians are still better than 57."

A recent survey conducted by the city of Toronto of 20 major North American cities shows that none has more councillors than Toronto. There's a belief by some, and as you mentioned today, by some on city council, that city council is too large and unwieldy.

In today's Toronto Star, Craig Bromell, the president of the Toronto Police Association said, "We're very much interested in the downsizing (of city council) and we think it should be done and it should be done as soon as possible so that it's in place for the next election."

I want to know what the financial impetus is for realigning Toronto city council and how this exercise will benefit Toronto taxpayers.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. This is the topic that is on the minds of Torontonians as they seek to have better governance for themselves and a better break for the taxpayers.

As I said this morning, in 1997, as a temporary transitional measure we went to a 57-councillors-and-a-mayor model for the 1997 election. But it was indicated at the time to city council that they should take the next couple of years to refine their numbers and to come back with a proposal. Unfortunately, Toronto city council was unable to come back with a proposal so that we could take action before this and bring council down to a manageable size.

Let me put this into a context. Toronto currently has 42,000 people per councillor, less than Mississauga, less than Edmonton, less than Vancouver, less than New York, less than Chicago and 10 other cities in the survey. Only five cities have fewer people per councillor than Toronto.

This province has led by example. It's time that the Toronto taxpayers receive the same fairness from our government.

Mr Newman: Three years ago, when Bill 103 was brought before this House, the bill that amalgamated the former city of Toronto with Scarborough, North York, East York, York, Etobicoke and the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, where seven municipalities became one, the original plan was to have the city of Toronto governed by 44 councillors plus one mayor.

In light of your announcement today, Minister, what kind of end result can the citizens of the city of Toronto expect to come out of this?

Hon Mr Clement: We're still looking at a variety of options. Both 22 and 44 have been discussed and we consider both of them viable options, but we wanted to get some input from the mayor and the council. We would like to get that as soon as possible so we can include it in the legislation.

I want to say to this House that the city has come a long way through the amalgamation process. There have been cumulative salary and benefits savings, about \$85 million for 1999, and they're projected to be about \$104 million for next year. The non-salary benefits are about \$36 million, and \$46 million for 2000. So I could say without fear of contradiction that amalgamation savings to date have totalled nearly \$121 million for this year and could reach about \$150 million next year.

It's obvious that amalgamation has been a great benefit. We want to take the next step to ensure that the city of Toronto council can act in a clear way and in an accountable way to benefit the citizens of Toronto, to deliver the best services at the least possible cost. That's what we owe the taxpayers in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for York South.

Applause.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Thank you. I didn't know I had so many fans in this place.

I want to go back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs on this matter of reducing the city of Toronto council size. Try and help me out here, Minister. I want to understand this. You're saying to a city of 2.5 million people that they have until sundown on Saturday to make up their minds. What you're suggesting here, if I'm not mistaken, is that you're going to allow them some input.

My question to you is this, Minister: What process do you have in place to allow the good citizens of this city to have their say and to have some input into your plan?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me clarify: If they want to have a say while we're in the midst of drafting the legislation, which incidentally is something that this government has taken to heart—previous governments did not do this—I have to have a deadline because I have to in good conscience present a bill to this House at the earliest available opportunity. But there will be other opportunities as the bill goes through first, second and third readings. I don't think I need to educate the honourable member, who has more experience than I do about—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Will the minister take his seat. Order.

Hon Mr Clement: —the parliamentary procedures that this House has adopted. But certainly each and every one of the 22 ridings in Toronto has an MPP who has a constituency office. I encourage them to talk to their MPPs. It's very important that people such as yourselves and such as our MPPs, such as the NDP MPPs hear from the taxpayers about how important it is to deliver better for less, to always look for the ways to ensure that the taxpayer gets a break. I'm sure your office will receive some calls and I'd be happy to receive that information as well.

Mr Cordiano: Let's get this straight. You're saying that you want people to have some input, and between now and sundown on Saturday you're going to provide magically for some input. I did not hear a process outlined as to how they would have their say. In fact, you're suggesting that you're going to draft the bill, but you want their input. So which is it? Do you want their input into drafting the bill, or do you have a bill and you're not going to have any input? What's the process?

1450

We're simply asking, what is it you plan to allow the good people of this city, 2.5 million people, to have some say in how this is going to unfold? We have not heard that. Between now and Saturday sunset you have not outlined how they're going to have their input. Can you please do that for us?

Hon Mr Clement: I'd be happy to comment on that. I don't think it's rocket science here. People are going to be in their constituency office tomorrow, yes? It's Friday; the House isn't sitting; I'm sure you'll be in your constituency offices. I know our members have offices with staff as well as themselves being available. There is an opportunity for citizens, the good hard-working taxpayers of Toronto to have their say, and that's very important as well, even before we get the bill introduced.

We're giving them that opportunity. There's an opportunity after the bill is introduced. It's called first reading. There's an opportunity during debate on second reading. There's an opportunity for debate during third reading. All of those opportunities exist and we welcome the input because that is what is so important about this process.

I want to say, for the record, that the calls coming into my office, the faxes coming into my office and the e-mails say Torontonians want a break, they want a city council that works and they want to get a break as taxpayers. That's what we're committed to. That's what this government is always looking for.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister responsible for Children. Yesterday Campaign 2000 released its Ontario Report Card on Child Poverty. In this report they make a series of recommendations about how the Ontario government could improve its record on child poverty. Minister, is the government acting on these recommendations?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for this important question. As a matter of fact, I had the opportunity to meet last week with the members of Campaign 2000 and I'm happy to tell this member and the members of the Legislature that, yes, our government has already acted on a number of the recommendations that are contained in their report card, which they released yesterday.

The first recommendation, which is very important to all of us, and it is important enough to Campaign 2000 to make it their first recommendation, is that we should establish an early years program across this province.

Mr Speaker, I know that you are aware that this is something that in fact is happening as we sit in this House today, so I'm very proud of that.

The other part that I think the House would be interested to know is that Laurel Rothman, the executive director of Campaign 2000, when I met with them, said, "We were very happy with it and you should be proud—Ontario certainly took a leadership role."

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member's time is up.

Mr Tascona: Minister, could you please outline other initiatives our government has taken since it assumed office in 1995 to assist low and middle income families across the province.

Hon Mrs Marland: I think it has been said a number of times in this House by a number of ministers that we're concerned about all families and all children and all forms of poverty in this province, including child poverty.

We believe that the best way of helping these children and improving their lives is to help their parents get a job, and that's why we're very happy that we have 615,000 net new jobs in this province since we became the government. We happen to be a government that doesn't believe in just writing a welfare check and saying: "Go away for a month. Don't bother us." We believe in being proactive in the lives of these children and these families in this province: the very fact that we have 451,000 fewer people on welfare, which by the way includes—I'm sure the Liberal members will want to know this—190,000 fewer children in families dependent on welfare.

We're very proud of our proactive programs and we're happy—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

PARAMEDICS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question would have been for the Minister of Health today, but since she's not here, it's for the Acting Premier and Chair of Management Board. I just want him to know that it's not about the lottery corporation or the Roberta Bondar Building, but it is about another community in northern Ontario that's on the cusp of a health care crisis. We have the ambulance paramedics in Thunder Bay threatening to

go on strike tomorrow morning if an agreement that all the parties except the province signed off on six weeks ago, that seems to have everybody happy—50% of the cost of that agreement would come from the community of Thunder Bay; the other 50% has to be paid for by the province. At this particular time the province, even though they've known about it—we've had conversations with the minister herself—have not come to the table to say they will play the part they need to play to make sure this crisis doesn't happen.

Minister, will you today tell us that you will put an end to this possible occurrence tomorrow morning by coming to the table and giving your 50% to this agreement that everybody else agrees to?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I believe the Minister of Labour wants to answer this question.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Right now they're in a dispute about the employer situation and who they work for. What happened was both parties referred their positions to the Ministry of Labour, asking for a ruling on exactly who is in fact the employer. The Ministry of Labour has taken those, obviously vetted them and sent them to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for a decision. Basically the position of the government, which is fair and reasonable in my opinion, is we need a decision from the Ontario Labour Relations Board to determine the actual employer before we can move forward on any designations or decisions with respect to costs, settlements, who pay for the settlements and how they pay for the settlements. It's not a case that anyone is holding this issue up or in fact delaying it at all; it's simply a case where we need a definition of exactly who the employees are employed by, and until we get that it's very difficult for us to move forward.

Mr Martin: Minister, this is not a labour issue; this is a health care issue. The community of Thunder Bay is going to be at risk tomorrow if these ambulance paramedics are not at work, if they're on strike. You have in your hands the ability to come to the table and say that you will resolve this so they can continue to do their work, and then perhaps discuss these other issues that you've put on the table here today.

It's very clear that the group they negotiated with was Superior North Emergency Medical Services. The cost of the agreement is going to be picked up by the municipality to a level of 50%. The province only has to kick in the other 50%. The employers, the employees and the community of Thunder Bay are in agreement here. The only piece missing is the province. Will you divert a health care emergency in Thunder Bay tomorrow by coming to the table and saying that you will put your 50% on the table?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First off let me tell you this: We said very directly to the parties that there can be no strike until it's determined who they work for. If they're under HLDAA they can't strike; if it's under the Labour Relations Act they can strike. So be very understanding of this: If they do go on strike—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Listen, if they go out, it's not a proper strike. We've also done this: If they do go out on strike illegally, there's a contingency plan in place to provide ambulance services for the area.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Tony, I'm trying to get across to you that we have a contingency plan in place should there be any illegal strike. We have covered every possible angle. We're not delaying. The simple fact is there's a problem here. They don't know who the employer is. Under the hospital act they can't strike; under the Labour Relations Act they can strike. They asked the Ministry of Labour to solve the issue. We took the submission, sent it to the Ontario Labour Relations Board and in fact I called the parties this morning to try to talk with them. We couldn't be any more involved and do more to avert this situation, other than having this unhelpful intervention.

1500

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today I have reintroduced an act to protect Ontario children who ride school buses. It has been more than four years since I first introduced my bill—four years of intensive lobbying, gaining support from local, provincial and national organizations that advocate vehicle liability, four years waiting for the Harris government to introduce a meaningful deterrent to protect our children from reckless drivers who pass school buses illegally.

I have delivered over 30,000 petitions to this government in support of this bill. I'm proud to have the Marcuzzi family and the Loxton family here in the gallery today. They have lived the nightmare of losing their daughters and sisters because of irresponsible drivers who refuse to obey the law. They understand the need for vehicle liability and are here to fight for it. They know this government has its priorities all wrong.

Tell them, Minister, why won't you pass this bill?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): I'd like to congratulate the work of my colleague the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex and his dedication to this issue. It is indeed a tremendously important issue. The safety of our children is a priority, I believe, of everybody in this House.

We have taken action. We've cracked down on people who illegally pass school buses. We've doubled the fine for the first offence to a maximum of \$2,000; for a subsequent offence to a maximum of \$4,000. Of course, those people who do this irresponsible act face potential imprisonment, as well as six demerit points. It is illegal to pass a school bus and it can be reported to the police.

With respect specifically to your bill—and I understand the passion you have for it and I have great sympathy for it—unfortunately your bill does not target the aggressive driving, it does not give demerit points,

and it isn't appropriate to give policing powers to bus drivers.

Mr Hoy: Minister, I suggest you reread the bill, because it provides a conviction mechanism and it does target drivers.

You say you don't want to give police powers to school bus drivers. This is absolute hogwash. School bus drivers already have the power to identify lawbreakers if they could only see their faces. But this is the problem; most often they cannot. It tears them apart to watch helplessly, as they must all too frequently, when somebody ignores the flashing red light.

Tell Ontario school bus drivers why you won't give the law the teeth to apprehend lawbreakers who threaten the lives of 810,000 children each and every day on our school buses.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I don't think anybody can imagine anything worse than losing a child to an irresponsible driver. It is a very serious matter, and I do agree with my colleagues from across the floor that we have to continually address this whole question of road safety.

This is why tonight there will be the first meeting of the advisory panel that I put together on road safety. We're bringing together the 20 main road user groups to advise on potential changes to the Highway Traffic Act.

We take safety very seriously. We have acted in the last four years, and I'm pleased to state that our roads in Ontario are the fourth-safest in North America. That being said, it doesn't matter if it's one child or one person who is killed, that's one too many.

We want to work with you to make our roads safer, to make sure we can address this. We just don't feel this bill is the right approach.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the right ministry, the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, and it is with regard to this wonderful publication, the Millennium memento.

I believe that encouraging our students to read, write and dream about their future is a good thing. I know the contributions of our young people are to be cherished and treasured. Student excellence should be shown and is evident in this publication.

But some of my constituents have said that this journal is not the best use of taxpayers' funds. Some people want to turn the good things into bad so they can further their own agendas. I find this type of conduct disappointing.

Minister, would you outline for the members of this Legislature the background and the cost of My Ontario memento journal? Does this come from the education budget?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I'd like to thank the member for Peterborough for his question. I know he's deeply concerned about this issue.

Let me tell you first off that this money did not come from the education ministry, it came from the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. What we asked the students of Ontario to do, and we asked all students all across the province, was to write and talk about how the province was going to look in the year 2020. We wanted kids to write stories, draw pictures and even write songs so that we could take their imagination and use it and enjoy the wonderful things they had to say. Let me tell you that this publication cost the taxpayers of Ontario less than \$1 for each child in the province.

Mr Stewart: Indeed, this is a wonderful and an excellent initiative. I don't know why anyone would raise any concerns about it. After all, the costs you outlined are quite modest.

This sounds like an excellent resource for educators across this province. However, I have heard that some educators are trying to turn this into a political issue by refusing to distribute the book and some are even throwing them away. Once again, the hopes and the dreams of young Ontarians are being eroded by a few militant individuals in the name of self-interest.

Minister, can you explain to the members of this Legislature and my constituents why these books are being distributed to our schools. How do you respond to the questions about the partisan nature of this attack?

Hon Mrs Johns: I can't help but express my disappointment with the comments that are being made in eastern Ontario. For a very modest investment by the taxpayers of Ontario, they're making hay of a document that was prepared and written by our children.

Let's just think for a minute. The change from this millennium to the next millennium is a very important event for all of us, and it's going to be a very important event for our children. This memento helps children to record those events. There are blank pieces of paper for them to record the things that happen to them during the year. This is a document that they can keep for years and years and tell their children about what they did in the year 2000.

In the front of the book I'm going to work with my young children and we're going to write down what we did on New Year's Eve, who they spent this great evening with, the kinds of things that happened to them in the year 2000. It's really—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. You would be aware that in the community of Elliot Lake we are three physicians short and we are looking at having our emergency room at St Joseph's General Hospital closed to the 14,000 people in Elliot Lake come January.

I note that you seem quite prepared to allow your Minister of Health to pay northern doctors less money to

look after emergency rooms than you do southern doctors. Minister, could you explain to my constituents in Elliot Lake why you are prepared to pay less money to northern emergency room physicians than they get paid in southern Ontario?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I thank the member for the question. Indeed, it was a pleasure being in Elliot Lake not too long ago, where I had a chance to talk to the member and the mayor and members of council and the seniors in the community about their concerns with respect to development in northern Ontario. I also had a chance to talk to them about health care in northern Ontario.

I remain committed to working with the Minister of Health to improve access to health care services throughout the province, including, importantly for me, northern Ontario. The work that's been done so far in attracting 115 specialists to northern Ontario and in terms of funding to keep northern and rural emergency rooms open with the sessional fee has been successful; and through the northern Ontario heritage fund, funding for the Northern Academic Health Sciences Network, which is linking major hospitals with about 30 other locations; and recently, as I mentioned in the House yesterday, announcing about \$5 million in funds to help out with primary care in northern Ontario. These are the things on which I continue to work with the Minister of Health and through my ministry to improve access to health care for people in Elliot Lake and throughout northern Ontario.

1510

Mr Brown: Well, that was the non-answer of non-answers. I asked a very direct question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The question was quite simple: Why are you discriminating against northern physicians in emergency rooms at the expense of patients in northern Ontario? Why do we have one-third fewer specialists in northern Ontario than are necessary according to the Minister of Health's own records?

We in northern Ontario expect first-class access to hospital emergency rooms. We expect access to physicians. Your Minister of Health has given us total failure in alleviating these problems. We have communities against communities. We have fee schedules that differ from southern Ontario to northern Ontario.

Minister, you need to be advocating for the people in the north. That's why we send a minister to the cabinet table every Wednesday morning. We want you there to advocate for the patients in northern Ontario, making sure that our emergency rooms are open and that our physicians are compensated comparably to physicians in southern Ontario. Why do you support a two-tiered payment schedule?

Hon Mr Hudak: I guess it is true that we are discounting fees to physicians practising in overserved areas to encourage them to move to underserved areas like Elliot Lake. But I'm positive. Let's be clear. With respect to emergency room support, 78 different emergency rooms have been kept open because of the action of

this government to help fund on a sessional fee, including 40 in northern Ontario.

Recently my ministry funded Think North, an innovative program by northerners for northerners to help bring doctors to northern Ontario, with a CD-ROM and Web site. I think the member is talking about an APP program. I'm pleased to say that a second set of the alternative payment program for emergency rooms is coming forth. It could help emergency rooms, I hope, in northern Ontario.

That's my role at the cabinet table that I take very seriously. I'm very proud as well of my work on the rural and northern health care framework which is dedicating resources to help alleviate the long-standing problem of physician supply. We talk about 115 more specialists in northern Ontario, the 40 emergency rooms in northern Ontario kept open. It's a proud record to continue to build upon with the Minister of Health and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: To follow up on a point of order raised by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan relating to Bill 23, I think the member was questioning whether that bill was in order relevant to the omnibus nature of the bill.

We wanted to provide you with some information for your consideration. Clearly omnibus bills are not new to this House. Precedents show—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Klees: That's right. Omnibus bills have been submitted by parties in this House for many years. I'd like to refer you to Beauséjour, section 626 on page 192. "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill."

Where a bill adheres to this requirement, no Speaker in our parliamentary tradition has ruled such a bill out of order. The measures contained within Bill 23 certainly fit within the umbrella of the long title, which reads as follows: An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system."

As I said before, omnibus bills are not new in this House and regularly have been found to be procedurally acceptable where they have conformed to this theme of relevancy in their long titles as laid out in Beauséjour.

Rulings by Speakers of this Legislature and precedents in the federal House of Commons support the practice of using one bill to demand one decision on a number of quite different and related subjects.

The content of the bill before us, Bill 23, provides for the restructuring of services and the recouping of health care costs to provide for reinvestments within the context

of the limited availability of funding for health services. Both of these are important in ensuring the support and management of the health care system in our province, as stated in the long title of Bill 23.

The scope of the legislation dealt with in this motion is similar to many previous omnibus bills introduced by this government and previous governments, and certainly the former NDP government. In fact, the NDP's Bill 175 and Bills 26, 152 and 25 of the last Parliament were all omnibus bills of a similar scope to the bill before us today, and they, I remind you, were deemed acceptable and in order.

Points of order raised when the NDP's Bill 175 was called for second reading expressed doubt whether the contents of that bill demonstrated a theme of relevancy. At that time it was noted that the matters covered by that bill ranged from automated land registry to offices allowing alcoholic beverages to be sold in provincial parks. Now surely there's a wide range of themes that that particular bill dealt with.

The NDP's Bill 75 was subsequently found to be in order by Speaker Warner and it was eventually carried in this House. The bill before us today is much smaller in scope, as well as in diversity, than was Bill 175.

We believe the precedents are clear. Bills are in order as long as there is a theme of relevancy among the contents of the bill. In this case, the umbrella of the long title demonstrates the coherence among the proposed bill's contents.

I submit, therefore, that the contents of Bill 23 fall within the umbrella of its long title and the bill should be found in order.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his contribution.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You will be aware that this bill deals with two very distinct items. One deals with giving the ministry the right to commence lawsuits against third parties to recover costs associated with payments by OHIP. What that means, and what we know that is about, is the question of being able to sue tobacco companies. The second part of the bill, as we understand it, deals with the minister's ability to continue to issue directives, as was done by the Health Services Restructuring Commission—two very distinct and separate functions, albeit under different pieces of legislation, under the same ministry.

Again, the opposition is quite prepared—and the government voted against giving second and third reading to those parts of the bill that deal with the question of lawsuits against tobacco companies, number one. You refused to allow it to come to a vote today.

The opposition is opposed to part III of the bill. What the government is doing, Mr Speaker, in our view, is contradicting Beauséjour; that is, forcing us to vote aye or nay on two different, very distinct items, and therefore taking away our rights as members.

I urge you in the strongest possible terms to look at this. We have offered to give second and third reading to the part of the bill that we support. The government has

continually talked about time limitations and difficulties getting all their legislation through. The opposition is quite prepared to allow second and third reading today and is supportive of parts I and II of this bill. The problem is that the government is putting these bills together in a way that makes it difficult for members of this House to express their points of view, but more importantly, to vote on matters that are very distinct and different with respect to matters of significance. That, in our view, is not at all the way we ought to be conducting affairs in this House.

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Briefly, further to the point of order, Mr Speaker: You'll appreciate the fact that when I raised the point of order earlier, it's somewhat customary to continue the debate on the point of order as opposed to resuming the debate after question period, so I had shared some of my reference points with the Hansard reporter. Since the government whip has reintroduced this debate, there is another reference point which I would like to share with the Speaker before you make a ruling on this.

1520

I believe, going from memory, that it's a reference to a decision that was made in the British House of Commons where there is, I think the phrase is, a "potential embarrassment" to members of the House because they will be forced by the nature of an omnibus bill—if they were to vote in accordance with their support or lack of support, they could be put in a position where they would be voting yea to one part of the bill and nay to another part of the bill.

As you will appreciate, when the bill is being placed without being divided, we don't have the opportunity to vote yea to some parts of the bill and nay to other parts of the bill. The decision in the British House of Commons was to have the Chair allow for a division of the bill in order not to embarrass the members by being required to vote only one way because the bill had not been divided.

In order to provide you with those references, I would be quite happy if you chose to withhold your opinion this afternoon. We will not, I understand, be calling for the vote on second reading this afternoon. There would be ample opportunity for you to review this issue, which we believe is a serious issue that's going to arise not just on this bill but on any bill in which there is, by the nature of it being an omnibus bill, a situation in which we may well wish to vote differently on different parts of the bill.

I think I have to rephrase "parts of the bill." That's the difficulty with an omnibus bill. It looks as though we're concerned about parts of the bill, and normally you'd get an opportunity to say yea or nay to parts of a bill—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Where?

Mrs McLeod:—when you're in committee. I realize that you're not aware of that, Mr O'Toole, because we've had so little opportunity to vote on parts of bills in committee recently, but that's standard practice. We have, in fact, had some opportunity to do that. But in this case we're talking about an entire bill that deals with two very

different issues. It's not component parts of a same bill, even though it's being presented as a single bill.

I would hope that you'd have an opportunity to look at these precedents before ruling, Mr Speaker, and that before the second reading of the bill is placed, you would have an ability to decide whether this should be divided so that we could have an opportunity to vote separately on parts I and II—which we contend are a separate bill—and part III of Bill 23.

The Speaker: I thank the member for her comments. On the same point of order, the member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Two points, if I might, on behalf of my caucus with regard to this issue.

The first one is just a reminder to my friend the House leader of the official opposition that when he makes reference to the opposition, he is including us. He is quite within his rights to speak to the position of the official opposition, but any question of speaking for the third party, we can do that for that ourselves. I'm sure that he will conduct himself more appropriately in the future when referencing who he represents on this side of the House.

Secondly, I would also concur with the concern. I don't know how much latitude you may have in this regard, but if possible I would ask you to consider what has happened as a cumulative effect with this government over the time that we've seen the Mike Harris government in power, in terms of how much of a lesser role this House plays, how much less time there is in committee, the use of time allocation motions on virtually everything. It is now considered somehow to be obstructionist on the part of the opposition to suggest to the government that something is not going to be passed in the span of one sitting day, that somehow we're slowing things down.

The government now has changed the rules to the point where they can ram through a piece of legislation, from the time it's introduced to the time that it's given royal assent, within a matter of days, and there is absolutely nothing that we can do about that under these rules. I do agree with my colleagues in the official opposition, given that environment, that at the very least we need you to preserve our right to show where we have dissent as apart from where we have agreement.

If at all possible, I would ask you to take a look at where we have been, as a Legislature, in terms of serving the democratic needs of the people of Ontario and where we find ourselves today, almost five years hence, in terms of the relevance of true democracy in the province of Ontario. This is a point where you can return to us those rights and privileges that we still have, the few that we may still have as members of this place, albeit not part of the governing party.

With that, Speaker, I would ask you to consider the NDP's submission on this point of order also.

The Speaker: I thank the member very much. Chief government whip.

Hon Mr Klees: On the same point of order, I just want to comment on the fact that there's some suggestion that this is an obtrusive bill. I would suggest to you that if this is obtrusive—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Klees: The fact of the matter is that this is probably the most unobtrusive bill that has been before this House that I remember, and certainly any of the precedents that I've referred to in my arguments previously. This bill deals with one matter that is simply an extension of powers that were there previously, simply extending them to the minister to complete a job that needs to be done. So this is nothing new. It's simply a matter of extending a time frame. The other matter deals with the same ministry and is certainly not a consequential issue.

I would also suggest that in the matter of dividing and not being able to vote for one part of a bill but being in favour of another, again, I don't know of another piece of legislation that I've seen in this House where a member couldn't say, "I agree with this; I have some problems with part B." That simply is the reality of legislation. It may not suit every member's needs at every time. If we go down that track, I really think that it misses the point.

Again, I submit to you that this bill conforms with the principles as set out in Beauchesne. We trust that you will find it in order for those reasons.

The Speaker: Thank you. I will be ruling on this today in the event that it is called by the government. We will go to petitions, and I hope to get back before orders of the day on that.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Mr Speaker, it is duly stamped.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north

which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I affix my signature in full accord with these concerns.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition signed by over 1,400 people in the Scarborough area, to be followed next week by an additional 3,000 signatures that have come in over the past 24 hours. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I am pleased to sign this petition on behalf of myself.

1530

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a number of petitions signed by people in places like Walford, and many from Hornepayne.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern

Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I am proud to affix my signature to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition signed, "Bring Back Haldimand-Norfolk Counties":

"Whereas we, the undersigned, do not want a region-wide, single-tier supercity; and

"Whereas we support the two county model representing two single-tier cities (one each for Haldimand and Norfolk); and

"Whereas we believe this model will give us a government that is closer to the voters, providing the greatest degree of 'accountability' by our elected representatives; greatly reduce the number of politicians; greatly reduce taxes through the elimination of multiple administrations, services that are repeated six and seven times; and produce further cost savings through adjusted service delivery methods; and

"Whereas the tax revenue of the Nanticoke Industrial Centre is to be divided equitably (based on population) between each of the two new counties;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to bring back Norfolk and Haldimand counties."

I affix my signature to this.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, as a permitted preamble to reading this petition, if I may commend the member for Scarborough Centre, Marilyn

Mushinski, for taking the lead and championing this cause to make sure that justice and victims are respected in Ontario, and with your permission petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a 'deal with the devil' with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets;

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I am pleased to support and sign this petition myself on behalf of the people of the riding of Durham.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have more petitions concerning the northern health travel grant.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to: acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern Ontario travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I'm pleased to sign this along with many residents of the northwestern part of my constituency, including the fine community of Manitouwadge.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have a petition forwarded to me by Cathy Walker, director of health and safety for the Canadian Auto Workers union on behalf of their thousands of members.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens); and

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances at work; and

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It was a petition that was brought forward by the member for Scarborough Centre, and I want to congratulate her on bringing that petition forward.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a 'deal with the devil' with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and the sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: that the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets;

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I've signed my name to this worthwhile petition.

1540

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): A further petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Sarnia is witnessing many women developing mesothelioma and asbestosis as a result of the asbestos brought home on their husbands' work clothing; and

"Whereas similar cases are occurring in other areas of the province;

"We, the undersigned, ask the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to allow compensation for family members who develop occupational illness as a result of workplace toxins inadvertently brought home."

I add my name to those of these petitioners also.

DRIVER EXAMINATIONS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition titled Clear the Drivers Test Backlog, and it's signed by a number of young people, mainly high school students, from the Port Dover-Simcoe-Turkey Point-Vittoria area. It reads:

"Whereas the backlog for final road tests is unacceptable; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is not able to get rid of the backlog, and most of the new examiners have been based in Toronto; and

"Whereas young and elderly people are often intimidated by the driver's test examiner and the finality of the test; and

"Whereas the driving tests have become very expensive and amounts to little more than a money grab by the government;

"We, the undersigned, petition to the government of Ontario to continue to revamp the driver's test system and implement a better system to get these tests done in a timely manner that is less expensive."

I support these young people and hereby sign this petition.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have here a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the great member of Scarborough Centre dealing with the Karla Homolka issue.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a 'deal with the devil' with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario's streets;

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I affix my name to this great petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Orders of the day.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): Speaker, order G23.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): G23, second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system.

The Acting Speaker: I'm going to recess the House for 15 minutes while the Speaker considers the point of order on this bill.

The House recessed from 1544 to 1610.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): First of all, I want to thank all the members for their participation.

As you know, in recent years bills which have amended more than the three statutes being amended in Bill 23 have been found to be in order. Indeed, many bills have amended numerous statutes across a number of different ministries.

The test of the orderliness of such bills is that it contains a shared theme of relevancy. In the case of Bill 23 I find that it does.

I would note that there have been numerous omnibus bills that have been found in order by previous Speakers, who considered them to be acceptably consistent with parliamentary practice.

As a result of my review of Bill 23, I will be guided by that which I have alluded to. So I therefore find Bill 23 in order.

I would, however, like to say in that determining this as Speaker, I have found that omnibus bills cause me great concern. I take what the member for Hamilton West has said very seriously. The opportunities for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected and evolving practice over the last few years has tended to work against that. In my ruling, I say very clearly that I find this bill to be in order.

The other part was given by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I would like to address the member's concerns regarding the lack of notice of consideration of the bill.

The member will know that our standing orders do not require any member to give notice to the House of their intention to introduce a bill, whether a private member's bill or whether a government bill. All members become aware of the bill at the same time when it is introduced. When it is printed, all members receive it at the same time. Bill 23 has certainly not deviated on these accounts, and I now properly find this before the House. Therefore, if the bill is to be debated today, as the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has asserted, I find no procedural difficulty in doing that.

But again I say, and I take with great respect what the member for Hamilton West has said, that the opportunity for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected. Evolving practice over the last several years has tended certainly to work against that.

That is my ruling. I want to thank all of the members for their help and their participation here today.

The member for Scarborough Southwest has the floor.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr Newman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I'd like to advise the House that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the members from Willowdale, London-Fanshawe and Brampton Centre.

I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, to speak to second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system.

In particular, I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about the responsibility of the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care under the extended section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act proposed on November 30, 1999. Under the proposed amendment, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care would maintain responsibility for the completion of hospital restructuring in the following 22 Ontario communities that have received directions from the Health Services Restructuring Commission. I'd just like to take a moment to go through those communities.

Those communities would be Brant county, Brockville, Essex, the five counties in the Cornwall area, the GTA/905 area, the Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge area, Hamilton, Hastings-Prince Edward, Kent, Kingston, Lambton, London, Niagara, North Bay, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, the Sault—Mr Speaker, I know you would be interested in hearing that the Sault is included in this—Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Waterloo and West Perry Sound.

This responsibility entails the minister extending time lines to assist hospitals to finish restructuring projects such as building new hospitals, opening new hospital wings and cardiac and cancer centres, and delivering improved services to their communities.

It goes without saying that we remain unshakeable in our continuing commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which is based on universal access to publicly funded health care. This very positive amendment I speak of should be viewed as integral to the focus our government is assuming in our second term of office;

that is, the sustaining of the health system with special emphasis on improving the health of Ontarians.

The thrust of the extension is practical and straightforward: To provide flexibility and support to hospitals as they move forward to better meet the needs of their growing, aging and changing communities. The proposed change also includes a requirement for a review of the minister's responsibility in January 2005.

As you know, for the past four years our government has been carrying out the most ambitious reform and modernization of a provincial health care system ever undertaken in all of our country. To realize that objective, we took office in 1995 with the determination and the vision to change the health system to serve the people of Ontario far into the next century.

We all realize that the prerequisite of a strong health system is a strong and growing economy in which new jobs are created quite literally on a daily basis. So over the past four years we have worked hard to cut taxes—we've cut taxes a total of 99 times—we've reduced red tape and we've done what we could to support the private sector in creating new growth and job opportunities. In fact, since the throne speech of September 1995 over 640,000 net new jobs have been created in our province.

As a result of all those changes our economy is now the strongest of any province in Canada. It is in fact the strongest of all the G7 nations. Our goal, quite simply, is to see that it remains the strongest in order to protect our capacity to support entities that Ontarians cherish, particularly high-quality education and health services.

Health system change was essential because previous governments had put off what was so badly needed in our province. For instance, over 10,000 beds—that's the equivalent of 35 medium-sized hospitals in our province—had been removed from the hospital system by 1995, yet no effort had been made to reduce the redundant overhead and administrative costs.

To the members on the opposite side today, you had the opportunity to make the system better but you chose to do nothing, and we have improved the health care system in our province.

We, however, had the courage to start the restructuring of Ontario's health system in order to ensure its very survival. Change—focused, clearly defined change based on a plan and driven by a vision—was badly needed. We have that vision. It's a vision of a quality integrated health services system where performance can be assessed and in which health providers are accountable for the resources they use and the outcomes they achieve.

The first step is securing our health budget here in Ontario while increasing spending to meet the increasing service needs of a growing and aging population. In response to this year's federal budget, Premier Harris renewed his commitment to spend each and every dollar received back from the federal government on health care.

Let's be very clear. While our government has continued to pour more dollars into the province's health care system since forming the government in 1995, the

federal government was busy slashing transfer payments for health care services to the provinces, and particularly to Ontario. But now they've come around and they've restored almost \$900 million. That's a first step. We've seen some action on their part, but it's only a first step. Despite this funding transfer, today the federal government only contributes 11%, or 11 cents out of every dollar that is spent in this province on health care. Our government, I'm proud to say, in spite of this has succeeded in increasing Ontario's health care funding to \$20.6 billion, and that is by far the highest in provincial history in Ontario. And we're not done.

1620

During June's provincial election, Premier Harris committed to further increasing health care spending by a guaranteed 20% over the next four years. This will mean nearly \$4 billion a year more in health care in Ontario by the year 2003-04. In fact, we've already been experiencing positive results from the decisions of this government.

The increased dollars are rapidly accelerating the pace of health care, allowing us to proceed with such priorities as hiring more nurses in our hospitals. We've allotted funding of \$480 million to support the increased role of nurses in Ontario, and we're adding some 10,000 nurses to the health care system over the next two years.

Furthermore, the number of day surgeries has increased, new drugs have been developed, new technology, and we are continuing to see the expansion of dialysis units across the province. There are approximately 25 new communities that now have these services available.

We presently have 56 new up-to-date emergency rooms being built or planned. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I've had the opportunity to be at the opening of some of these facilities and one in particular that I recall was the new emergency department in Windsor. I listened to some members opposite from Windsor the other day talking about health care, and they didn't once mention the brand new emergency department that they have in their own community. They talk about doom and gloom. I don't know what it is with the Liberal Party, but doom and gloom seems to be their mantra over there. If they haven't been to the new emergency department in Windsor, I'd really encourage them to go.

The work of the Health Services Restructuring Commission took place within the context of this dramatically changing health care system. As you may recall, the Health Services Restructuring Commission had issued more than 1,200 legally binding directions to 119 of the 203 public hospital corporations in the 22 communities across Ontario that I mentioned earlier.

Recently, Minister Witmer announced added flexibility for Ontario hospitals as they restructure and build improved health care facilities. This was a direct response to recommendations from the Ontario Hospital Association and its members, to help ensure their ability to effectively implement the HSRC directives.

The minister will maintain responsibility under section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act. Without the proposed change, the minister's responsibility would end on March 1, 2000, unfortunately before most hospitals will complete their restructuring projects. As noted earlier, the minister's responsibility will be reviewed in 2005.

I think it's important to note that so far our government has invested more than \$1.2 billion in hospital restructuring, and most recently the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to providing an additional \$2 billion, for a total investment of \$3.2 billion. This money will assist hospitals with such restructuring costs as severances, labour adjustment and retraining, capital redevelopment, communication, legal fees, consulting and so on.

In addition, our overall investments and improvements to the health system mean that hospitals will be better able to provide newer equipment for faster diagnoses and better treatments.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission finished its essential work of issuing directions last March. Hospitals in the 22 communities that I mentioned at the beginning of my comments are now putting into place the expanded and improved health care services they planned in collaboration with the commission. All they need is a little time, and we intend to give them that.

In the words of David MacKinnon, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Hospital Association, "The minister needs to retain the authority to revise HSRC directions in order to reflect patient care needs over time, new technology, opportunities to use new technology and other factors affecting patient care in communities across Ontario." Many other prominent members of Ontario's health care system strongly support this initiative as well.

Let me quote at this moment Ron Bodrug, who is the president and chief executive of the Scarborough Hospital, which was recently created from the amalgamation of Scarborough General Hospital and the Salvation Army Scarborough Grace Hospital. Mr Bodrug says, "I am requesting that the Ministry of Health take the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate study, monitoring, review and necessary changes to the commission's directives and recommendations."

Dan Carriere, president and CEO of the York County Hospital said: "The Ministry of Health and government of Ontario have taken bold steps to improve health care provincially through the restructuring and decentralization of services. The retention of Bill 26 would enhance your ability to complete these important initiatives and provide additional financial support to hospitals through appropriate redistribution of savings secured through restructuring."

David Levine, the president and CEO of the Ottawa Hospital said, "Our ability to move rapidly during a time of merger has been recognized as the single most important factor in a successful merger." He goes on to state, "It is essential that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has the power to make changes that are necessary to allow hospitals to keep moving, finding new

ways to offer efficient, rapid, quality care to our patients."

These comments clearly indicate the level of support this proposal enjoys among managers of our health care system. Brian C. Lemon, the CEO of the Lakebridge Health Corp was cautionary: "I am concerned that without your ability to make revisions to these legally binding directions, we may not be able to take full advantage of any opportunity to make revisions that further enhance and improve Ontario's hospital system."

I would like to take a moment just to elaborate a little on the specifics of the proposed amendment at this time.

Over the past four years, the experts on the Health Services Restructuring Commission have worked with hospitals, district health councils, other health care providers and patients, to make recommendations on the tough decisions needed to improve and sustain our hospital system.

Already we've turned the corner on restructuring and we're seeing the results of more than \$1 billion invested in more modern, more efficient hospitals. We're beginning to see the realization of solutions to problems that other governments had refused to face for at least a decade. We have made the tough decisions and we're starting to see the improvements today in our health care system in Ontario.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission sought the advice of health care experts throughout the province, and the advice that came back was about tough decisions. I'm proud to say that we've made the tough decisions, and it's time to put them behind us and to look forward. The Health Services Restructuring Commission, as I mentioned, has finished the bulk of its work.

Our government's work now is to renew and sustain one of the world's great health care systems by working hand in hand with efficient, up-to-date hospitals ready to tackle the 21st century.

As I've already mentioned, consistent with our campaign commitment, our government is actually increasing health care spending by 20% over the next four years to \$22.7 billion, and that would be more than any government of any political stripe has ever spent on health care in this province.

I just want to take a moment at this time to review some of the health care reinvestments that have occurred here in Toronto, because I come from a riding within the city of Toronto, the riding of Scarborough Southwest. Members opposite have gone throughout the city of Toronto alleging that our government has somehow taken \$99 million from the health care system in Toronto since 1995. I want to say that they are wrong. I want to cite some examples of reinvestments our government has made here in Toronto.

Priority programs, an extra \$145.5 million; there is \$1.5 million for pediatric oncology; growth funding, \$3.9 million; the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, \$7.3 million; preschool speech and language, \$4 million; hospital restructuring reimbursement, \$94.7 million; emergency room funding, \$28.5 million; transition fund-

ing, \$34.2 million; increases to base hospital budgets, \$21.5 million; Y2K readiness, \$97.5 million; mental health, \$27.1 million; Ontario drug benefit spending increase, \$56.2 million; physician OHIP payments increase, \$121 million; nursing funding, \$41 million; emergency room capital expansion, \$14.9 million; one-time working pressures funding, \$9.1 million; neonatal funding, \$10 million; the 60-hour stay for new mothers, over \$9 million there.

1630

If you look at the figures and take the time to do the research, you see that health spending in Toronto has actually increased by over \$993 million since 1995. That's almost \$1 billion more. In addition to that almost \$1-billion increase in health care funding here in Toronto, there have 5,837 new long-term-care beds that will be added in Toronto. Existing long-term-care beds that have been refurbished: 1,600. We've seen two new dialysis services offered in my community of Scarborough. Four new MRI machines have been allocated to Toronto in addition to the seven that are already there. We are putting our money where our mouth is with respect to health care.

We are also reinvesting in frontline patient care, from the distribution of physicians throughout the province to the creation of long-term-care facilities. Each and every dollar saved from health services reform has been reinvested into priority patient care areas.

To date the level of this reinvestment has topped \$1.5 billion. This includes \$326 million in expanding priority programs such as cardiac care, cancer and dialysis. As I already mentioned, approximately 25 new communities now have dialysis services available right in their home communities. Thirty-six MRIs will be up and running by the year's end. That's up from the 12 when we took office in 1995. We've seen a 45% increase in cardiac surgeries. And of course, the quality of cancer care has increased.

Upon receiving the cancer care task force report, Minister Witmer announced \$15.5 million in new annual funding to significantly reduce waiting lists and waiting times for Ontario cancer patients. Hospitals have asked us in turn to ensure that they have flexibility to safely and effectively complete their restructuring. The proposed extended timeline leaves that responsibility with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, while allowing hospitals the latitude to complete their restructuring plans.

As well, we have another \$2 billion in capital funding yet to be allocated. We have yet to determine where and when that additional funding will best benefit the hospitals, medical staff and population of Ontario.

Ontarians need reassurance that hospitals are able to set reasonable timelines for the start and finish of their restructuring projects. At the same time, we must be sure that our health system, including hospitals, are able to continue providing the best possible care to patients during restructuring. The proposed change gives us the flexibility to fulfill these necessities.

Our responsibility for restructuring needs extending because of the sheer magnitude and complexity of the task at hand. We're talking about four years of hard thinking and planning by experts spanning the entire breadth and depth of the health system, more than 100 hospitals in 22 communities, more than 1,200 separate directions—many of them complex and time consuming—and \$3.2 billion in unprecedented commitment.

It is my hope as I address you today on Bill 23 that we will work together towards this vision of health services in Ontario, that together we will address the challenges of the 21st century, and that together we will ensure that hospitals implement their plans and continue to meet the needs of our population at every stage of their lives.

Hospitals across Ontario have proven exemplary in assisting with restructuring and helping to modernize the health system. I want everyone here to know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I, as her parliamentary assistant, personally admire and respect the way they've adapted to the dramatic changes of the past decade.

Hospitals continue to amaze us with the remarkable progress they've made in both absorbing and leading the changes, changes in medical knowledge, in clinical services and in treatment.

We've travelled to the communities and we've visited the hospitals. We've always seen hospitals aiming at the highest quality care and delivering the highest quality services. We've seen examples of the dedication and commitment of compassionate caregivers throughout Ontario, be they health professionals, support staff or CEOs or volunteers.

They all get my vote of thanks and that of Premier Harris and of Minister Witmer, and I trust they get yours as well. For indeed, they deserve it. We appreciate the efforts of those who have worked so hard and given so much of themselves during this difficult period of restructuring. We value them and the great distance that they've come.

With this extended timeline, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care can continue to work into the early years of the 21st century with hospitals across the province. More importantly, this extension affords the chance for our government to provide communities across Ontario access to the best and most technologically advanced health care system in the world.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Before the member for Willowdale begins, pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Windsor West has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The paper has been filed, so this matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): It's an honour to rise today to address this chamber on this very important piece of legislation.

When our government came to office in 1995, we inherited a health care system that was in desperate need of change. There should be no doubt about that. Just as

clearly, it should be acknowledged that this restructuring process has not been an easy one, but it has been a necessary one. The health care system in this province remains and must remain a publicly funded, universally accessible system that meets the needs of what is a growing and aging population.

The technology and the advances that we've seen over the last number of years are wonderful. The people of this great province are enjoying better health as a result of those advances, as well as the hard work and dedication of those individuals who work day in and day out in our hospitals, but let's be clear that there are costs associated with that.

It's all too easy in this province to lose sight of the fact that those men and women and the medications and the technology all cost money. It's our obligation as a government to ensure that there are sufficient funds available for that essential service. Fortunately, because of the boom in the Ontario economy, we have increased tax revenue which will allow us as Ontarians to be sure that there will be sufficient resources available.

But this restructuring process is not over yet, and that's the purpose of the legislation that has been tabled and is in front of you today. It is legislation that will allow for the process to be completed. It is most important that it is completed and is completed in a reasoned manner.

As you are aware, I represent an urban riding, the riding of Willowdale. The primary health care facility within our riding is the North York General Hospital. That hospital offers a wide range of clinical services and nine general programs, the first being adult mental health. It has an emergency service centre, family and community medicine, genetics, long-term care, maternal-newborn services, medical services, paediatrics and surgical services. I should say that anyone who drives by the North York General Hospital or has for most of the past year will note the existence of very large cranes—I'm not talking about birds; I'm talking about building cranes—because the expansion that is underway at that facility is unprecedented.

In fact, just this past week, we have another good-news announcement about investment in health care in Willowdale at the North York General. The phenomenal redevelopment that's going on there will double the size of the emergency room and essentially increase the size of the hospital itself twofold. I want to specifically mention that Minister Witmer was there, as I said, within the past week or so to announce that the North York General Hospital will be receiving \$41 million—that's \$41 million—of additional funding to assist the hospital with its \$66-million expansion of the Leslie Avenue site.

I want to pause to take note of the fine work that Mr MacKenzie and many others associated with the North York General Hospital have done in order to fundraise, in order to ensure that the remaining dollars are and will be available to complete this very necessary expansion.

1640

It's important, too, to remember that the North York General doesn't only operate at the one site. It also

involves the Branson site. It is true that the Branson hospital, as it was five or six years ago, doesn't exist. But it does exist as a renewed health facility, as a revitalized health facility, a facility that has state-of-the-art ophthalmology equipment going in there, a facility that has urgent care, after-hours-care equipment and clinics and a facility that will continue to offer the residents of North York, Willowdale, York Centre and the adjacent communities top-notch care.

What have we gained by reason of this necessary restructuring? We've gained the expansion dollars that I've mentioned that are going into the facility at the Leslie Street site, but we've also gained increased equipment. We have one or possibly two MRI machines that will be added to the North York General Hospital. One of them may in fact be at the Branson site. Mr MacKenzie, the president, is currently involved in a process to consider where the second MRI will be placed. It's hoped that one will be an open MRI, one will be a closed MRI. But these are obviously very expensive and very important pieces of equipment that simply didn't exist before and do now by reason of the fact that the funds are being directed to where they are necessary.

Before I leave the good-news stories about investment in health care in the riding of Willowdale, I want to talk about what's gone on at the St John's Rehabilitation Hospital, which is just on the border of our riding—actually, it's well within the riding, I should say. It has seen a similar introduction of cranes into its facility. The redevelopment there is quite phenomenal, totalling almost \$2 million. The number of patients, the number of clients who will be served at this facility, as compared to where we were five or six years ago, is very impressive and again an expansion program that is unprecedented for that facility or almost any facility. St Bernard's Hospital is the facility that is just outside of the riding of Willowdale and it too has seen an almost \$300,000 increase in funding over the last short while, as has the Bloorview site of the North York General Hospital.

I want to acknowledge that there have been cuts in health care, and the cuts in health care funding that I refer to are those that have been administered by the federal government. It's most unfortunate that the federal government felt it was appropriate to cut \$2.8 billion in transfer payments from Ontario alone, without regard to the consequences of that. As a citizen of this province, as a citizen of this country, I find it abhorrent that the federal government and its representatives stand and crow about how they have a surplus. I know how it is that they have a surplus. They have a surplus because they have cut back on transfer payments for essential services such as health care to the people of Ontario. It's not just the people of Ontario who have experienced this dastardly setback; it's the people of Canada.

As proof of that, Mr Speaker, I'd ask you and those in the gallery and those watching on their television sets to consider what is going on in other provinces of this great country. Whether it be British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland—the list goes on and

on—each and every one of those provinces has experienced severe problems with their health care system. Often those problems have materialized in the form or have gained public attention in the form of doctors' strikes, nurses' strikes, disruption of services by non-medical health care personnel, but in every province across this country there is a crisis of sorts in health care.

The one constant factor is our federal government, the Liberals in Ottawa and their refusal to continue to fund health care as they have done historically. They have cut back \$2.8 billion and they were kind enough to restore \$900 million. I guess we're to applaud that, but I'm offended. I'm offended that they continue to think it is all right for them to abandon the health care institutions and the patients of this province and of every province across this country.

I don't want to dwell on the federal government, but I would be remiss if I didn't add this one fact, and if you remember nothing else from my address today, I hope you'll remember this: In 1969, 30 years ago, the federal government paid 50 cents of every health care dollar spent in this province. Today, 30 short years later, the federal government pays 11 cents of every dollar. I think that is absolutely offensive, and the people of this province and of this country would agree with me. That is why I appreciate having the opportunity of emphasizing that point today, because until the federal government acknowledges its responsibility, its historical responsibility in this regard, all of Canada will continue to experience the sorts of problems that members opposite raise and talk about each and every day in this Legislature.

I want to go back to the bill directly and acknowledge that it is not a panacea. This is not going to fix every problem with health care, but it is a step in the right direction, a step down a road that we embarked upon three short years ago with the restructuring commission and a necessary step. I don't have much time left; some of my colleagues wish to speak to this matter as well, but I want to talk about the recovery aspect of this bill. As you well know, Mr Speaker, by reason of the fact that you were asked to rule on the different aspects of this health care legislation today, there are other parts of the bill beyond simply the restructuring aspect. We are asking this Legislature to provide us with the authority to pursue wrongdoers for health care costs incurred as a result of their negligence or criminal activity. I'll give you one example, if this legislation is passed, of how that enhanced power would work.

If you consider a corporate citizen or an individual in this province who—and I won't call it negligence because it's far beyond negligence—disposes of toxic waste in a public waterway in this province, if you consider the consequences that flow from that, very direct consequences, severe consequences, and consider that it may adversely affect the health of the citizens who live within the vicinity of that waterway—also, let's remember that we have a universal health care system, as we should, that will respond and will assist those

individuals who have been injured by reason of that negligent or criminal activity—we as taxpayers will pay for that as part of the OHIP system, and that's all well and good. But ultimately this bill, if passed, will allow OHIP to recover those funds from the wrongdoer.

Under the current system, one I have some familiarity with, the only mechanism that is in place for that sort of recovery would be by way of a subrogated action essentially piggybacked on top of that of an individual or group of plaintiffs who choose to institute formal legal proceedings and incur the costs associated with that: the costs associated with the retention of a lawyer, the costs associated with the purchase of discovery transcripts and the costs associated with setting the matter down for trial; it is only if an individual or a group of individuals have the wherewithal and the inclination to pursue that litigation against the wrongdoing corporation or individual. Where will there be an opportunity for the province to collect funds they paid out to an injured victim?

1650

This legislation, if passed, will provide a far more sensible and a far more streamlined mechanism by which we will be able to recover from that wrongdoer. We will not have to wait for an individual or group of individuals to institute legal proceedings. OHIP will be able to directly pursue the wrongdoer to recover money for all the hard-working citizens in this province, to recover money that will go back into the health care system and assist all of us when we need those services. So I'm very pleased that we have that additional aspect of this proposed legislation in front of us today, and I'm very optimistic about the consequences that will flow when and if it is passed.

Before I leave that topic, though, let me be very clear: This alternative and more direct way of OHIP recovering funds will not—and I want to emphasize will not—in any way, in any shape, in any form interfere with the rights of the victim that exist today. The victim—or victims if they are a group—will still have the opportunity to institute legal proceedings and to go after the wrongdoer for their general damages, be they non-pecuniary general damages or pecuniary damages or special damages or any sort that the court deems appropriate. That opportunity, that avenue, will remain.

If anything, the victim's rights and opportunities will be enhanced, because along with their individual lawsuit against the wrongdoer, be it an individual or a corporation, along with the individual victim's lawsuit, they will also be alongside the lawsuit that would be sponsored by OHIP, which is clearly an entity with some significant resources. So the wrongdoer, the tortfeasor or the criminal who is being pursued, would then be in a position of not attempting to wait out or to outspend the victim, because the resources of the government would be on their side in many instances.

As I conclude my remarks, I want to emphasize that this legislation, if passed and enacted, will only serve to enhance the rights of victims within this province. I'm very hopeful that this legislation will be passed, and will

be passed in a timely fashion, so we can complete the job we have started, so we can pursue the wrongdoers in the manner that I have described and that the legislation sets out rather clearly.

I'm hopeful because I know everyone in this assembly ultimately wants the same thing. They ultimately want there to be a health care system that is responsible and responsive and that is properly funded. I'm hopeful they will assist us in making what are necessary decisions. Let me emphasize in my conclusion, as I said at the outset, that these are necessary and difficult decisions, and I invite the members opposite to take a good, hard look at where we are at and to assist the people of Ontario with this final stage of the restructuring that is so necessary.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Restructuring hospitals is a necessary part of our government's vision for health care in Ontario. It's all about putting patients first.

It will affect 22 communities: Brant county, Essex county, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kent county, Lambton county, Niagara, Waterloo, Toronto, the greater Toronto area, Haliburton, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Leeds-Grenville, Kingston, Prince Edward-Hastings, Cornwall, Nipissing, Sault Ste Marie, West Parry Sound, and of course my community in London.

The reason this restructuring is so necessary: In 1995 we had a government, a province, that was essentially bankrupt, with an almost \$12-billion deficit. In all fairness, the Liberals of 1990 or prior to that started, and the NDP when they took power were faced with some difficult decisions. The largest difficulty they were faced with was a federal Liberal government that reduced transfer payments to the province of Ontario. Therefore, the NDP, with the recession, through no fault of their own other than high taxes, were left with not managing health care, not managing hospitals.

That's an interesting point about management. What we've seen from the federal Liberal government, as we heard from the member from Willowdale, is that we're not sure where the priorities are. As we've heard from Ontarians, health care is an important priority. You hear that not only in Ontario but in every province in Canada. If it's such a priority to our citizens, why would the federal government today only be paying 11 cents on every dollar of health care? Yes, they will tell us they had difficulties and they needed to balance budgets, and perhaps that was the case at one point, but now that the budget is balanced and we are into a surplus, what do we hear from Jean Chrétien? Not to restore funding for health care; we don't hear that. We hear "new spending," "new programs."

To the citizens in my riding of London-Fanshawe, whose median household income is approximately \$40,000, health care is an important issue. They want it to be accessible, they want it to be closer to home and they want it properly funded by both levels of government. As we heard from the member from Willowdale, when this agreement was first struck with the federal

government in 1969, it was a true partnership, where the federal government contributed 50%, or 50 cents on every dollar, for health care. When you have a partnership between different governments, an even and equal sharing of costs—that was the intention, and that's what went on for years until the slashing started from the federal Liberals.

In 1995, Premier Harris had to make some very difficult but necessary decisions. Health care has changed. We're doing procedures today that were not done 30 years ago. Those procedures cost money. They're very expensive procedures. We see people with some illnesses who are able to survive because of the quality of health care and the way it has changed.

In our riding, I want to say that the London Health Sciences Centre is a leading hospital in Ontario but also worldwide. Premier Harris was at the London Health Sciences Centre in October. They used the first computerized robot that allowed for non-invasive heart surgery, and they conducted a successful surgery using this robot. Certainly on my community's behalf, the Ivey family contributed to that robot and they are to be thanked. That is where health care is going.

In the summer I had the opportunity, on behalf of the government, to go to Windsor, where the ground was being broken for one of the new cancer care centres. As we've heard, Windsor has benefited enormously. Their hospitals have improved. But continually, what do we hear from the members from Windsor? Doom and gloom. Do you know why they are receiving the benefit today in Windsor? It's because of a strong economy. How did that economy become strong? By cutting taxes. By cutting taxes, we not only created in excess of 600,000 net new jobs but increased government revenue. By increasing government revenue, we were able to invest in health care, in education, in the priority things that we all care about.

While we're on the issue of priorities, all governments need to prioritize where their spending is going to go. All governments cannot do all things. At some point you have to decide what is important to the people you represent. We continually hear that health care is important. That's why in our platform we've not only increased funding by 20% for health care; we've made it our number one priority, in contrast to the federal government. We'll see where their priorities are: gun control, supposedly.

1700

Handguns in this country have been registered since the 1930s; always have been and will continue to be registered. Now what they've done is spent \$200 million to register long guns, shotguns. The odd person who has a shotgun for hunting purposes, a farmer who may have a shotgun—to get these registered, the federal government so far, to date, has spent \$200 million. That's possibly a good idea, but is it a priority? Again, with the 102 federal Liberal members in Ontario, I urge our citizens to contact them and see what is a real priority to our federal Liberal friends.

On top of that, another priority the federal government came up with—and this was quite an interesting one. Anne McLellan announced \$200,000 to educate the public on vehicle theft. Interesting: \$200,000 on advertising. We know that car thieves steal cars. People go home at night, park their vehicles in their laneways, and someone comes along, forcibly enters the car, hot-wires it, drives off and so on. So now Anne McLellan is going to, I don't know, mail out or somehow send out \$200,000 worth of literature to the public to say—what? I don't know. "Don't park your vehicle in your laneway"? Anyway, that's the type of priority they have. Obviously the priorities are not right.

What the health restructuring has done, just a few things: three new cardiac care centres; the opening of five new cancer care centres in Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener, St Catharines and Sault Ste Marie; 56 new up-to-date emergency rooms; and tripling the number of MRIs in the province.

We're committed to bringing the highest quality of health care available into our communities, Mr Speaker. I thank you very much, and I'll be sharing my time with the member from Brampton.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's my pleasure to speak on behalf of this bill. Rather than taking the macro approach perhaps that my colleagues have, I'm going to try to zero in a bit more specifically and give an example of what the HSRC, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, did in our area and how things are working out. I thought that sort of local perspective would help show that things really are working.

In addressing the health care issue in this province, it was a bit like turning the Titanic around in a shallow harbour. I think we all understood that we have this massive ministry worth somewhere in the neighbourhood of—well, when we came into office in 1995, it was about a \$16-billion or \$17-billion budget, and now of course it is just over the \$20-billion mark with the investments that were badly needed into the system. But that being said, like previous governments of all stripes, it was too easy for us to throw funds into the system when it was needing them. We also wanted to find efficiencies. We knew there was fat in the system where money was not being directed as quickly and directly as it should have been towards patient care.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): So the Premier hand-delivered it.

Mr Spina: Smitherman, someday you'll learn, when you're here long enough.

We had many overserved and underserved areas in this province, and one of the things we had was a situation where we had overserved areas like the big boondoggle in downtown Toronto with 44 hospitals. That was the most unbelievable situation we had ever seen in this province, and yet we had communities across the rest of this province where we were severely underserved, particularly some of our rural and northern communities. What we had to do was find a way to redirect those funds.

On a local basis, in Brampton we had a hospital that worked very hard to make sure that it maximized its use of government dollars. Peel Memorial Hospital, as it was known, was a very efficient organization basically not only underserved with staff and not able to cope with the growth of population that we experienced in Brampton and in Peel in general, but also having to cope with an outdated medical facility that needed refurbishing and expansion.

Under the Health Services Restructuring Commission, some good recommendations came forward. They recognized that this hospital needed some infusion of dollars in order to be able to expand and renovate and to cope with the growth of patients and of the population in our area.

I'm glad to say that we are at least headed in that direction. We're not there yet. We're not going to be able to solve all of the problems of the world in one year, in one month, in a week. I think we probably have already seen that we've not been able to resolve all of the issues within even one mandate of government. We're pleased that we are able to come back for a second term to be able to follow through with the recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

One example is that the HSRC recommended that Peel be amalgamated with Etobicoke General and Georgetown hospitals to create what originally was called the Northwestern GTA Hospital Corp. This has since been named after one of the not so recognized outside of the medical community heroes of medicine, who is a Canadian and who has made his mark on an international basis around the world for the progressive methods and progressive way of delivering health care services: Sir William Osler. We're proud to recognize that our Northwestern GTA Hospital Corp is now the Sir William Osler Health Corp. Yet we were able to retain the tradition of the Brampton Memorial campus, which was a tribute to our fallen heroes in the two great wars that we fought.

There has been a substantial amount of reinvestment as a result of some of the savings that were realized. I think, and I stand to be corrected, we had something like 22 vice-presidents under the three hospitals in Etobicoke, Brampton and Georgetown. With the amalgamation to the Sir William Osler Health Corp, we now have, I believe, six vice-presidents. At an average salary of around \$125,000 apiece, we can see immediately that 16 fewer people at \$125,000 a year realizes savings of a little under \$2 million a year in salary alone. This is good savings, because now these hospitals are able to redeploy those salaries into hiring staff, into hiring nurses and interns and diagnostic technicians and so forth, to be able to deliver the services that we need for our patients.

1710

Traditionally, over 40% of our patient load has left Peel, both Mississauga and Brampton, to go to Toronto in order to get specialized services. The Liberals and NDP present this distorted picture of Ontario's health system, and that's not the complete picture of health spending in this province, because in Peel we have found that we have been able to repatriate some of those patients who

travelled from Peel to Toronto for services: priority programs, \$17 million; cardiac operating funding, \$7 million; Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, \$1.9 million; a pre-school speech and language program, \$1.7 million; growth funding, \$30 million—this was the largest single shot of growth funding that our facilities in Peel received, between the Osler, the Credit Valley Hospital and the Trillium Health Centre, in well over 10 years. Why? We don't know, but sometimes you wonder whether it was politically driven, why we did not get our fair share of funding. We're still not there but at least we're coming a long way towards it.

We had \$6.6 billion to help reimburse for the hospital restructuring, Y2K readiness, mental health, drug benefits spending increases, physician OHIP payments increases, nursing funding, emergency room capital expansion, cancer capital expansion, 60-hour-stay funding. These are all programs where we as the Harris government, under Minister Elizabeth Witmer, have made conscientious decisions to be able to show that health spending in Peel has increased by over \$247 million since 1995.

In addition to that, there are things like long-term-care beds and capital equipment like MRI units, cardiac centres, cancer centres, new dialysis satellite units at Peel in Brampton, and so on.

Clearly this empowers the government to carry forward the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommendations, particularly those that have a very positive advantage to the communities we live in. We know there are other communities that are still in the process of working it through, and I think if we continue to work co-operatively between the government, the ministry and the local MPPs of whatever stripe, then hopefully we will be in a position to say that we have turned this big ship called health care around and now we'll begin pointing it in the right direction so that all of us in our province can experience the benefits of a good health care system.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): On lead speeches? I had not thought that there were questions and comments on the lead speeches, but I'm happy, in advance of doing a leadoff speech, to enter into questions and comments on the comments that have already been made by the government party.

Maybe to single out one of an hour's worth of comments, I'll go back to something which the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health said, which is that "we're putting our money where our mouth is." This may not be something that I'll actually get to in my own leadoff speech, so I'll focus on that now, because I have some very real questions about whether this government indeed puts its money where its mouth is when it comes to health care.

For example, I remember the Premier of the province saying that he was going to put every penny that he received from the federal government in the transfer of \$945 million directly into health care spending, creating

the impression among the Ontario public that they would indeed see almost \$1 billion in new health care spending on the part of this government.

The Minister of Finance, in his budget and then in his first-quarter financial statement, I believe, reiterated the fact that this government was actually going to increase health care spending by \$1.6 billion.

I want to look just at the operating side because, quite honestly, I've tried to make any numbers I can find in the government's budget add up to \$1.6 billion in increased funds between operating and capital. I can't find \$1.6 billion. I'll leave that to the Minister of Finance. What I know for sure is that the operating budget, which is going from \$18.925 billion to \$20.173 billion, is actually missing \$926 million of what the Minister of Finance called one-time funds, but funds which indeed were being spent on health care, or presumably were being spent on health care, and were allocated to health care in the last budget. If that \$926 million in so-called one-time funding had been left in the budget, and then we'd look to what happened to the operating budget, we'd see that it had only gone up by some \$322 million, not even making full use of the \$945 million that the Premier assured us was going to go into new health care spending. You could do a lot for the \$600-million difference.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): When you listen to the government members talk about Bill 23, if you're sitting at home watching in your living room, you'd swear that this was somehow good news that the mandate of the Health Services Restructuring Commission is going to be extended vis-à-vis the powers being given to the minister.

I would ask any of the government members who feel so good about this and proud to come on into Hamilton and talk to us about the Health Services Restructuring Commission. Talk to Hamiltonians about how much sense it makes to be shutting down the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital. Talk to them about how much sense it makes to have the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp running an almost \$40-million shortfall because of funding cuts to hospitals that this government has made. On the HPH alone we have an entire community standing unified, saying it makes absolutely no sense to shut down the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital, given the fact that recently they won one of the most prestigious international awards that you could possibly receive because of the quality of the service that is provided.

Yet it was the Health Services Restructuring Commission's recommendation, and this is interesting because the courts had ruled that the commission did not have the power to order psychiatric hospitals closed. The best they could do was make recommendations to the minister. The minister has decided she is going to follow those recommendations. So from those of us who are viewing this from the outlook of Hamilton, the idea that we would extend the power of the Health Services Restructuring Commission to the minister is something we've already experienced and, quite frankly, it stinks.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I'm pleased to be able to offer a couple of comments in the time available on this important bill.

It's very clear to people that the need for restructuring the health care was a priority. It was a priority that was recognized by our government back in 1995, recognizing that the previous government was only prepared to close beds and not deal with the kinds of structural problems that existed throughout this province, ones that were based on a history of the creation of hospitals that were falling behind in being able to have the technology, the kinds of resources that are necessary as we go into the next century. That has been the motive behind the restructuring that health care has taken in this province. It's recognizing the fact that we needed to put resources into those hospitals and being able to provide people with the kind of help and the level of health care that's necessary: MRIs, being able to increase the number of dialysis machines, those are clearly investments that were necessary, where we had to be able to take those health care dollars and put them into those priority areas.

I'm very proud of the commitment we made to restructuring in this province despite the fact that we have not until this last year been supported by the federal government. That support, while obviously welcome, still only represents 11 cents on the dollar.

1720

Mr Smitherman: I listened with interest to the speeches by the members of the government, and I was very shocked to see that finally they've taken responsibility for the Health Services Restructuring Commission as their baby. So often in this House we've heard the minister who announced it say, "We've shuffled this off to this arm's-length body and we have nothing to do with that process." So finally they've embraced it.

In my own riding the health services restructuring has ordered the closure of four hospitals. The Wellesley Central Hospital was ordered closed. Because it was full? No. Because they said it was empty. But in fact the beds are still full of sick people. We've got ambulances in the city of Toronto, as the district health council report of a few days ago indicated, that cannot find a place to take sick patients, not just because emergency rooms are overtaxed, but because the beds are full. The \$22-million deficit of St Michael's Hospital was such a problem that they have threatened to close the Wellesley Central Hospital early, and yet the capital investments have not yet been made so as to allow those services to be incorporated in the Bond Street site of St Michael's Hospital.

Who will take care of the thousands and thousands of people who require services in the emergency ward of Wellesley Central Hospital? Where will the patients who currently fill the psychiatric beds at the Wellesley Central Hospital be discharged to? On to the streets of Toronto, where already we see too many people who have been deinstitutionalized by government? I think that government members ought to take a very close look at that.

The last thing I'll say is that I've heard members from the 905 part of the city talk about the need to support the kind of growth that has occurred. But let's be clear about one thing: My own riding is going through explosive population growth as well. Condominium developments—11 in Yorkville alone are presently on the books. This is one very small portion of my riding. The government needs to have planning which acknowledges that people means the need for better infrastructure.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to rise in response to the comments today and to thank the members for their comments. I specifically want to address the comments made by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. She was the leader of the Liberal Party when they made a promise in 1995 to only spend \$17 billion on health care. When our government took office, this province was spending \$17.4 billion on health care. Each and every year that we've been in office since 1995 we've actually increased the amount of health care dollars spent in this province. At the same time, the federal government was cutting transfers to all provinces in Canada and they hit Ontario rather hard. As I mentioned here today, we've actually had an opportunity to see the money go back into the system.

Interjection.

Mr Newman: The member for Essex knows full well. He was there when—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Essex isn't in his seat, I believe.

Mr Newman: What I was talking about was not fictional, was not imaginary, because the member for Essex himself was there when I opened the new emergency department in Windsor this past summer. So he knows in his own community that these reinvestments are being made. The opposition doesn't want to talk about it. I give him credit for being there and acknowledging that it has happened. Other members just would not be there when that was announced.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Was he there?

Mr Newman: He indeed was there.

Our government has made a commitment to increase health care spending by 20% over the next four years. We're currently spending \$20.6 billion. That 20% increase, the campaign commitment from our Blueprint, would actually see \$4 billion more each and every year in health care by the year 2003-04. We're seeing increases in the health care spending across the province. It could only be a Liberal who could actually see an increase in health care spending and call it a cut.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs McLeod: I don't think I will take a lot of time at the outset of my remarks on Bill 23 to discuss the process by which Bill 23 was called for second reading debate this afternoon. We did spend some time earlier on it, and you have made some rulings on the points of order we raised earlier. However, I do want to make note of the

fact that I'm fully aware that bills can be introduced without notice, and typically are introduced without notice. My greater concern was that this bill was called for second reading debate with virtually no notice. I realize there's nothing in the orders that actually prohibit that, so I respect the ruling that you've made.

But it is a matter of practice for governments—I've actually been around long enough; I hate to think about having been around any place long enough to have to remember something that seems like it was part of a distant past. But I remember when we used to have a calendar from the week before that would tell us what we were to be debating in this place the following week. That meant that members could come into the House prepared, having done their homework, having given due consideration to the piece of legislation which was going to be debated. I actually thought that added to our capacity to bring due deliberation to important public business, which I believe that this Legislature carries out.

I will consistently raise my concerns with what I recognize is a change in practice by introducing bills for debate without prior notice. In fact, I suppose I should consider myself lucky that I knew at 11 o'clock this morning that this bill would be called this afternoon. I can remember some situations in the last mandate of this government where we didn't know during question period what we would be debating 15 minutes later. Nevertheless, I feel that there has been a serious deterioration of parliamentary process in this Legislature over recent years and I am going to continue to remember what good parliamentary process was like.

Mr Speaker, I appreciated as well your ruling on the question of being able to divide what we consider to be an omnibus bill. I recognize that this was sort of a mini-omnibus bill because there are really only two separate issues, although three acts are amended by the bill, but really just two separate and distinct issues that the bill is dealing with. It's still an omnibus act. Although the government whip, and you agreed with him, made the stretch to say that the title of the bill provides a theme of relevancy, obviously then you could have a gigantic omnibus bill that deals with every statute that is administered by the Minister of Health in order for the Minister of Health to have legislation that relates to the ability to support and manage the health care system. One of the things this government has been very adept at in its public relations spin is learning how to give names to bills which allow them not only to spin the public about what they're doing but also allow them to bring in many varied bills and measures under a single topic and refer to it as a theme of relevancy.

I will not accept that the title of a bill is providing a theme of relevancy. I believe it's the contents of the bill that have to be addressed in determining relevancy. But I take heart from the ruling you brought in earlier which indicated your belief that there had to be a theme of relevancy in order to determine whether different measures could be part of the same bill. I look forward to future decisions on your part, Mr Speaker, as to when

that theme of relevancy has been violated by the contents of the bill. I personally believe it has been violated in this instance.

I respect your ruling on this occasion. I wish you wouldn't have future occasions to have to consider it, but I hope on future occasions you will apply that standard in a very thoughtful and considered way.

I move to the bill and there are three parts to the bill, two very separate issues. I'm going to address part I and part II of the bill fairly briefly. Part I and part II of the bill amend the Health Insurance Act and the Long-Term Care Act and, as other members have noted this afternoon, provide the government with power to launch its own actions in recovery of costs where there is deemed to be negligence affecting the health of Ontarians.

We're supportive of this part of the bill although we have some concerns about the details. We think the bill has been put together in a somewhat hurried fashion and that there are some very key details missing. For example, we've already had letters today from the association of physiotherapists, who recognize the fact that they could be impacted by the terms of the bill. The bill is very specific in protecting against suits against physicians, against hospitals and against hospital laboratories. But when it comes to any other health care professional, it simply says protection "against such other persons or entities as may be prescribed in such circumstances as may be prescribed."

I had to read that three times to know whether that provided any protection to anybody. So I can appreciate the concern of the physiotherapists' association of Ontario and the podiatrists' association, who have already contacted us, even though they'd only known for some half hour that the bill was going to be called for debate. They contacted us to say, "We're concerned about whether this bill provides due protection for us."

I trust that before this bill receives its very speedy final reading, the Minister of Health will address these concerns and make it absolutely clear that the intent of this bill is not to put the government in the position of launching suits against health care professionals, that there are other procedures, other bodies that deal with questions of negligence or neglect on the part of health care professionals. She's not amending the Health Care Professions Act and therefore she can provide some assurance to groups that may be concerned about the breadth of part I and part II of this bill and the lack of specificity in protecting other health care professionals, not just physicians and hospitals and laboratories.

1730

Having said that, and I've almost addressed the entire part I and part II of the bill, I do want to note a certain irony, a certain surprise that this bill, when it was introduced without notice, gave rise to. The British Columbia government took an initiative much along these lines. I remember when it came forward. They introduced legislation in British Columbia that would allow them to order tobacco companies to help pay for costs associated with treating illnesses caused by smoking, and of course,

that's the intent of this bill. It really is, I believe, focused on the ability of governments to sue tobacco companies for the health effects and the health-related costs of smoking.

I remember when that BC initiative was introduced, we in our caucus and our leader very strongly supported that direction in British Columbia, and argued that Ontario should follow the BC lead, but that was not the view of the Premier at that time. The Premier, somewhat under pressure, as I recall announced—the first reaction of the government was to say that they weren't going to take any action in this regard at all. Some time later the Premier said that they would also seek damages from the tobacco industry, but they were going to take a somewhat different route from British Columbia. Rather than sue Canadian tobacco companies, they were going to seek status to sue American tobacco companies. We quite frankly saw that as simply being a stall, a way for the Premier to say, oh yes, he was concerned about the health effects of smoking, but in fact to relieve himself of actually having a responsibility to take any action.

We are surprised, but pleasantly so, that the government would see fit to bring in this legislation. We wonder, if it could be done so simply—let me see, today is Thursday, they introduced it on Tuesday and potentially could have it passed by Monday if that's the decision of the government—why did the government take so long to do it and what is their real commitment to dealing with tobacco-caused health effects and costs?

I feel as though I'm not giving due concern to part I and part II of the bill, but I trust, maybe falsely, that those who have expressed concern with that one part of the bill, which seems very unclear, will have their concerns addressed by the Minister of Health before this bill is finally called for third reading.

I want to turn to part III of the bill. Part III is the part that amends the Public Hospitals Act. This is where this bill really becomes the son of or daughter of or grandchild of Bill 26. Bill 26, as I'm sure you will recall, was the most sweeping piece of omnibus legislation that this Legislature has certainly ever seen. We've seen omnibus bills since, as you quite correctly noted in your judgment earlier today, but I hope we will never again see a piece of legislation that covers as much as Bill 26 did.

I'm going to take time to remind people of just how broad an omnibus bill this was, because this bill amended the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, it amended the Corporations Tax Act, it amended the Income Tax Act, it amended the Capital Investment Plan Act, and the Highway Traffic Act relating to toll highways. That was when the government brought in more powers to levy tolls.

It created the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and you can be assured I will be coming back to the Health Services Restructuring Commission before my speaking time has elapsed.

It brought in amendments to the Ministry of Health Act, it brought in amendments to the Public Hospitals

Act, it brought in amendments to the Private Hospitals Act, and amendments to the Independent Health Facilities Act. It brought in amendments to the Ontario Drug Benefit Act, the Prescription Drug Cost Regulation Act, the Regulated Health Professions Act. It brought in amendments to the Health Insurance Act and the Health Care Accessibility Act.

If there's time, I hope to be able to address some of the sweeping measures affecting health care, since health care seems to be our theme of relevancy in this bill. I hope I'll be able to address some of the sweeping changes to health care that these various acts that were amended under Bill 26 brought in.

Bill 26 amended the Physicians Services Delivery Management Act. Then it went on to amendments to the Pay Equity Act; amendments to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; amendments to the Public Service Pension Act and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union Pension Act; amendments to the Municipal Act. This is where the head tax was originally proposed. I wonder if anybody remembers that Mike Harris the Taxfighter was planning to allow municipalities to introduce a head tax or poll tax, as it was known in the ill-fated measure of Margaret Thatcher in Britain.

Amendments to the Municipal Act and various other statutes related to municipalities, conservation authorities and transportation; amendments to certain acts administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources; amendments to the Mining Act; amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act; and amendments to various statutes with regard to interest arbitration—as somebody who is facing the potential for a strike and walkout in an area of very great concern to my community, I know that one of the very real problems Bill 26 created was in having government-appointed arbitrators who have destroyed much faith in the public arbitration process.

I read that into the record not because it's immediately relevant to the act that is to be amended today, although Bill 26 most certainly is relevant because the purpose of the amendment to the Public Hospitals Act is to extend the powers given to the minister under the amendments to the Public Hospitals Act in Bill 26. But I did want to raise the other acts that were amended by Bill 26 to remind you, Mr Speaker, that there is no way in the world that you could find a theme of relevancy linking the acts that were addressed under Bill 26, other than, I guess, that it was an act to achieve fiscal savings.

That of course brings me directly to what this act, Bill 26, did in terms of amending the Public Hospitals Act, because it's the extension of the powers that were granted under the Public Hospitals Act under Bill 26 that we are talking about extending to 2005 in this bill before us today.

Under Bill 26 the Minister of Health was given unilateral power to close or amalgamate hospitals, and beyond that the minister and the government were given exemption from any liability for the impact on the health

of Ontarians for decisions that were made in the closure or amalgamation of hospitals. So the minister took unto himself total power to micromanage the hospitals of this province in every detail, because that's how sweeping the powers are under Bill 26 for the minister to be able to manage hospitals. This government took total power unto themselves and they absolved themselves of any ability to be held accountable in a court of law for decisions that were made under this bill.

There is this week one exception to that, and that was the decision that came down from the court in regard to the closure of Montfort Hospital, in which the court said there is another act which supercedes this act and the minister's liability from any action, and that is the act that guarantees francophone rights to service in this province.

But apart from that welcome limitation that we saw this week by the court, this government absolved itself of any legal responsibility for the decisions it could make with these broad, sweeping powers it had given to itself.

The bill also created the hospital restructuring commission. I want to recognize, in passing, that the hospital restructuring commission, which could take unto itself or be given by the minister any of the powers the minister now had under Bill 26, was also exempt under this Bill 26 from any legal liability for the impact of any decisions that were made.

There were other powers that were given to the government under Bill 26, and I want to note those.

The government was given the power to decide how many physicians performing what specialties would gain admitting privileges to which hospitals. That's actually section 14 of Bill 26. It is not proposed to extend those powers because those powers are not sunsetted, they're not revoked at March 2000, as the powers to close hospitals are.

The government was also given the power to reduce, suspend, withhold or terminate funding to a hospital if it is considered to be in the public interest to do so, considerably broadening the responsibility of the Minister of Health to look first and foremost at the quality of care being provided to patients in the hospitals.

The practice in the past, and under the old Public Hospitals Act before it was amended originally by Bill 26, gave the Minister of Health considerable power to go in and have an investigation of a hospital, and indeed to take over the operation of a hospital, to make orders regarding that hospital if there was concern about the quality of care or the management of care in the hospital. Bill 26 said that wasn't enough. It actually gave tremendously broad powers to the minister by saying that the minister could step in and take total control of a hospital whenever it was deemed to be in the public interest, which was undefined, to do so.

1740

Further on in Bill 26 it was made quite clear that in addition to concern for quality of care, management of care, access to care in our hospitals, the minister would be able to go in and take control of our hospitals and

issue orders and directives to hospitals in order to basically deal with the need to cut costs. The financial interests of the government under Bill 26 for the first time became equal to the quality of care and the management of care and the access to care that up until Bill 26 the government and the Ministry of Health had been primarily responsible for and accountable for, which is why Bill 26 also gave the Minister of Health the power to take over the operation of a hospital by appointing a hospital supervisor who would have all the powers of the hospital board.

Those powers are under sections 7 and 8 of Bill 26, and those powers are not being removed by the bill that is before us today. So the minister will continue to be directed under the amendments to the Public Hospitals Act that were brought in under Bill 26, to be as concerned with the cost-cutting financial resources of government when it comes to hospital care as she is to be concerned about the quality of care, and she will continue to be licensed to send in a supervisor without any investigation and take over the operation of a hospital when she considers it to be in the public interest to do so.

I wanted to make it clear what powers were given to the minister in relationship to hospitals and the Public Hospitals Act under Bill 26 because that's very much central to a decision of this Legislature as to whether a bill extending specific powers under section 6 of the bill, to have the power to close or amalgamate hospitals, is continued beyond the sunset clause of March 2000 which was built into Bill 26. The proposal is that since they haven't been able to complete the work, and will not have completed the work of restructuring the hospital system by March 2000, the minister should have an extension of those powers to close or amalgamate hospitals extended well into the year 2005.

In addition to reminding people of why we're dealing with the powers of the minister to close hospitals, I want to remind people that this omnibus bill was one which was brought in with considerable frustration on the part of the opposition in relationship to process. Because I have a lot I want to say about hospital restructuring, I'm not going to dwell on that extensively other than to remind members, many of whom were not here, that that bill was introduced without notice while members of the opposition were in an economic statement lock-up. The intention of the government was to pass it within two weeks, without any public hearings at all. It took the efforts of one of my colleagues to sit overnight in the Legislature in order to force the government to have at least two weeks of hearings on this extremely comprehensive bill. So you will appreciate why we continue to be extremely sensitive about the nature of omnibus bills and the process by which we consider them, particularly when they relate back to Bill 26.

I want to make one other point about the change in the powers that were granted to the Minister of Health through the Bill 26 amendments to the Public Hospitals Act. I have a Sack, Goldblatt, Mitchell opinion that was rendered on the impact of Bill 26 which notes that under

the old Public Hospitals Act, before it was amended with these new powers given to the Minister of Health, the courts had ruled that the minister could not act for fiscal or budgetary reasons alone or without regard to the effect on patient care in deciding to close or amalgamate public hospitals. I want to stress that, because our contention is that the minister's powers to close hospitals, to micromanage hospitals, as were given to the Minister of Health under the amendments in Bill 26, should not be extended. Under the old Public Hospitals Act, without those powers resident in the Ministry of Health, there were processes by which the minister could exercise accountability in relationship to ensuring that quality of care was the primary consideration in looking at the operation of hospitals and the involvement of the Minister of Health in overseeing the operation of hospitals.

It's amazing how the time flies, so I know I am going to have to return to this subject on Monday. I do want to lead into what will be the balance of Monday's discussion, about what has followed from the Bill 26 amendments to the Public Hospitals Act, because of course what followed was the establishment of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. This hospital restructuring commission was supposedly sent out to find efficiencies by closing or amalgamating hospitals, by restructuring hospitals. But it really was an after-the-fact kind of establishment of an efficiency-finding process, because the bottom line was that in one of its first actions as a government, the Mike Harris government decided to cut \$800-million-plus from the budgets of hospitals. It was only after the cuts were made that the hospital restructuring commission was put in place to go and figure out how they could find some efficiencies that would allow the hospital budgets to realize those \$800 million in cuts. I think it's important that we keep that in mind.

The parliamentary assistant earlier referred to the fact that when the hospital restructuring commission started out there were some 10,000 empty beds in the province but nobody had gone and closed a hospital before. Just once and for all I would like to remind people that the 10,000 beds that were supposedly closed weren't closed; they weren't empty because there wasn't a need for them. They were closed, they were empty, because the government went out and cut money from the hospital budgets. When you take \$800 million out of the hospital budget, there's only one place the hospital can cut. That's to shut down beds, reducing access to patients, which is why we have hospital lineups today.

So don't talk to me about the 10,000 closed beds and the failure to close hospitals around the closed beds, because the fact was that nobody, including the hospital restructuring commission in its subsequent work, actually looked at whether there was a need to reopen those beds by putting the resources back into the hospital system. If the hospital restructuring commission had started out with a mandate to actually look at what the hospital health care needs were in each of the communities across

this province they visited—I think they cite 22 communities—then maybe we would have had a restructured hospital system that people in those 22 communities recognized as having improved access to health care in their communities. That in fact is not what has been the result of the hospital restructuring commission's work, because that was not the focus of the exercise, to actually examine what would work to provide better health care in each of those communities.

I also want to recognize that something else happened when the hospital restructuring commission was set up. The hospital restructuring commission, under Bill 26, was not automatically given the powers that the government gave itself under Bill 26. Bill 26 did allow the government to transfer its now sweeping powers to micromanage our hospitals to the hospital restructuring commission. It did that under a regulation that was passed I believe in 1996. It was regulation 87/96, which said the hospital restructuring commission, established under section 8 of the Ministry of Health Act, "may issue directions under section 6 of the act or under subsection 9(10) of the act in the place of the minister." They set up a commission which had the power to make binding directives on our hospitals across this province and that ministers, both Minister Wilson, who established this regulation, and subsequently Minister Witmer, said took all power out of the hands of the elected officials in government to change the directions of a non-elected commission. I would submit to you that never before has a government so totally tried to absolve itself of responsibility for planning for the health care of the people of this province.

I want to recognize the fact that that regulation was withdrawn, coincidentally enough, just before the last election, when I think the government was finding itself somewhat uncomfortable with the kinds of directives that had been made by the hospital restructuring commission and which were now binding on the government itself. So at the end of April 1999, very close to an election call, there was regulation 273/99, which revoked regulation 87/96 and effectively took the powers that had been given to the commission back unto the Minister of Health.

1750

In the few minutes left of our Thursday afternoon debate, let me just recognize what the commission's work has led to. It has led to some 45 hospitals being ordered to close; 33 public hospitals, six private hospitals and six psychiatric hospitals have been ordered to close. They have issued 1,200 directives to 119 of 203 hospitals in 22 communities across this province. They are actually physically closing 33 hospitals, amalgamating 45 hospitals into 13 and closing down 29 hospital sites. The task that the commission undertook was to do all of this in four years' time. No wonder they couldn't complete their work, and they haven't. This was massive change right across the entire province.

How did they go about deciding what decisions would be appropriate in communities? How could they make

that many decisions, 1,200 directives, in the time the commission was operative? It became a somewhat simplified exercise, and I say that in respect of the restructuring commission. They were given an impossible task: "Go out and find \$800 million worth of efficiencies in order to justify this government's cuts, do it in a short space of time and make sure that nobody has any recourse to challenge what you're doing." So what could they do? They had to take some pretty arbitrary formulas and they had to impose those arbitrary formulas each place they went. Regardless of the community needs, regardless of differences from region to region, the same arbitrary cookie-cutter formulas were applied from place to place across the province.

No wonder communities across this province are saying: "Wait a minute. This doesn't work for our community. This is going to reduce access to health care, it's going to lower the quality of care that we can get in our communities." No wonder people aren't buying the hospital restructuring commission's defence that they're actually improving health care as a result of this exercise.

Communities are saying it won't work, and because communities are saying it won't work, they're putting up some resistance. That's one of the reasons why the Minister of Health now is asking for an extension of the sweeping powers to close and amalgamate hospitals that were given to her under Bill 26, why she needs that extension until the year 2005. My goodness, the original task was to be completed in four years, and the current minister now says: "We couldn't do it in four years. We need five more years to bring closure to this exercise of hospital closings and amalgamations."

One of the other reasons why the task could not be completed within the sunset period is that it seems the hospital commission wasn't able to find the operating savings that were going to make up for the \$800 million in cuts. This creates a bit of a problem for the government. The auditor in his report two weeks ago noted the fact that hospitals had not been able to achieve the savings that the hospital restructuring commission had assumed they could make. He noted, furthermore, that for some reason the operating funds weren't flowing to the hospitals along with the restructuring directives being implemented, and this has created some very significant problems as some hospitals that aren't to be closed have accepted new responsibilities and aren't getting the funds to carry out those responsibilities. It's a problem.

The hospital commission, originally sent out to find some \$800 million in cuts, as it completed its task has actually changed its sense of what its job was and said that they expected its decisions and recommendations will be an added cost to government, because effective restructuring requires reinvestment. In their final report, they actually suggested that the reinvestment would be about \$100 million more than any savings they had identified. So no wonder there's a problem for the government.

The government has a budget plan to take \$100 million out of hospitals. Hospitals are already running

deficits of at least a couple of hundred million dollars. They've got about \$2.2 billion, I believe, in accumulated deficits. So no wonder the government has a problem, when its own commission that was sent out to find savings comes back and says: "There's actually an added cost. You have to reinvest more, at least \$100 million more than we can find in savings." Add to that the fact that they haven't been able to find the actual savings, as the auditor tells us, and it creates a dilemma for the government, which is one of the reasons why the operating funds are not following the restructuring directives and why so few of those directives have actually been implemented at this point in time.

There were also unrealistic expectations that were set out by the hospital restructuring commission, unrealistic expectations in terms of how quickly you go about closing a hospital.

I'm not going to get into a full chapter and verse of what happened after the restructuring commission left my community of Thunder Bay, but I can tell you we were the first community to be visited. The commission had ordered that three of five hospitals in my community be closed, including the chronic care hospital, which has indeed now closed. I believe it's one of four hospitals that have actually closed since the restructuring commission undertook its work. It also ordered the psychiatric hospital to be closed. Its orders were finalized in October. It ordered that the chronic care hospital and the psychiatric hospital would be closed as of the end of March of the next year. Orders that came down in October were disruptive to the lives of the people who were patients in those hospitals, in both the chronic hospital and the psychiatric hospital. These were patients who were there for long-term care in most instances. These orders were incredibly disruptive to the lives of these patients. All of the disruption it caused with having to collapse a hospital and its organization and deal with the staff, the transfer of staff and decisions about where the services are going to be provided and where the money's going to come from, and all of that was supposed to be done for two hospitals by the end of March of the next year, a matter of months.

The chronic hospital has closed. It closed approximately in the right time frame. You will know that the Minister of Health has had to acknowledge that as the hospital restructuring commission set out to close six of 10 psychiatric hospitals in this province, it could not possibly be done as quickly as the restructuring commission was mandating. It's one of the reasons that you can't find the savings they were supposed to find. The Minister of Health quite rightly has said, "No psychiatric hospital bed will be closed until the care for psychiatric patients is available in the community."

We've seen very little progress in providing care for psychiatric patients in the communities, so there is a long way to go before those six psychiatric hospitals will close. I trust the commitment will be kept, that when it comes to the closure of psychiatric hospitals, no psychiatric bed will be closed until the services that psychiatric patients need are fully available in our communities. That

was another reason why the directives of the hospital restructuring commission have been implemented in very small degrees and why the Minister of Health now needs an extension of the power to close hospitals.

I will touch on one of the other reasons why the hospital restructuring directives have run a bit afoul of being achieved in the four-year time frame. One of those is because there seems to be a problem with the decisions they made about beds and about how many hospital beds should actually be left open. You will remember that last spring, again just before election time, there were considerable concerns about long waiting lines in emergency rooms. The Minister of Health put some Band-Aid money into emergency rooms. I think she said it was to be used to add beds at peak times to deal with crises. I'm not sure how the hospitals anticipate the peak times and know how to add the staff to open the beds to deal with a crisis until the crisis has actually arrived. Indeed, that has proved to be a problem, because we still have clogged emergency rooms despite the Minister of Health's announcement in July that she had fixed the emergency room problem once and for all. The fact that we haven't fixed the emergency room problem once and for all is the reason we get calls to say, "Did you know that there are 35 people on stretchers in the emergency room hallways of a Mississauga hospital?"

But that's perhaps a discussion for another day, because the hospital restructuring commission did identify a reason for the emergency room problems. They said the problem we have in emergency rooms is that there are no beds to admit people to when they come into emergency and have to be admitted. They said the reason there are no beds to admit people to is because people who need chronic care are in acute care hospital beds, and we all nodded and said, "That makes sense." We all knew from our home hospitals that was occurring. That seems like, dare I say, a wise observation on the part of the hospital restructuring commission.

It was a little bit puzzling then to look at the subsequent recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission, knowing that there were chronic care patients who were blocking acute care beds and causing problems in the emergency. They then went out and shut down chronic care hospitals. Their directives would involve, from this point on, the closure of some 3,500 chronic care hospital beds.

That does create a bit of a problem, because if you're shutting down chronic care hospital beds—and these aren't empty beds. These beds are all full; there are waits for admission to chronic care hospitals. So if you've got waits for admission to chronic care hospitals, you want to move chronic care patients out of acute care hospitals into chronic care hospitals and you shut down 3,500 chronic care beds, how are you going to move people into them?

The hospital restructuring commission had an answer for that. The answer was they would move people out of chronic care hospitals and into long-term-care facilities. I remember saying—and I'll end on this note since it is 6 o'clock—to the hospital commissioners when they

were in my community of Thunder Bay, "What about the people on waiting lists to get into long-term-care facilities?" They said, "They probably don't belong on the waiting list."

On that note, Mr Speaker, I will adjourn the debate, if that's the proper motion, and I'll—

The Speaker: Point of order.

Mrs McLeod: A point of order? All right, and we'll resume the debate on Monday.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I see the Premier has joined us. I'd like to seek unanimous consent to bring a motion to revert to question period.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard a no.

It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1801.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 2 décembre 1999

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

Loi de 1999 sur la protection environnementale des Grands Lacs, projet de loi 15, <i>M. Ouellette</i>	
Adoptée	1044
Loi de 1999 sur les programmes de santé et de sécurité pour étudiants, projet de loi 10, <i>M. Gravelle</i>	
Adoptée	1044

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 1999 sur la protection des enfants dans les autobus scolaires, projet de loi 24, <i>M. Hoy</i>	
Adoptée	1047

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, projet de loi 23, <i>M^{me} Witmer</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné	1081

AUTRES TRAVAUX

Visiteurs	
M. Lalonde	1047

CONTENTS

Thursday 2 December 1999

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Great Lakes Environmental Protection Act, 1999, Bill 15, Mr Ouellette	1027, 1035
Mr Tascona	1028
Mr Galt	1029
Mr Clark	1029
Mr Barrett	1030
Mr Bradley	1030
Mr Kwinter	1032
Ms Churley	1032
Agreed to	1044
Student Health and Safety Programs Act, 1999, Bill 10, Mr Gravelle	
Mr Gravelle	1035, 1043
Mr Martin	1037
Mr Gill	1038
Mr Bartolucci	1039
Mr Tascona	1040
Mrs McLeod	1041
Mr Christopherson	1041
Mr Patten	1043
Agreed to	1044

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Cyril Bollers	1044
Thornwood Public School	
Mr DeFaria	1045
Parent aide program	
Mr Gerretsen	1045
Cambridge Hornets Hockey Club	
Mr Martiniuk	1045
Landfill	
Mr Parsons	1045
Rent regulation	
Mr Kormos	1046
Nestlé job training program	
Mr Galt	1046
Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital	
Mr Duncan	1046
Dalton McGuinty	
Mr Newman	1046

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on estimates	
Mr Kennedy	1047
Report deemed received	1047

FIRST READINGS

Protection of Children on School Buses Act, 1999, Bill 24, Mr Hoy	
Agreed to	1047
Mr Hoy	1047

MOTIONS

Committee sittings	
Mr Sterling	1047
Agreed to	1047

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal restructuring	
Mrs Pupatello	1050
Mr Clement	1050, 1053, 1055
1056	
Mr Colle	1051
Mr Marchese	1053
Ms Churley	1053
Mr Newman	1055
Mr Cordiano	1056
Agricultural offices	
Mrs Pupatello	1052
Mr Hardeman	1052
Mr Hoy	1052

Millennium memento

Mr Marchese	1054
Mrs Ecker	1054
Mr Stewart	1058
Mrs Johns	1058

Police officers

Mr Smitherman	1054
Mr Tsubouchi	1055

Child poverty

Mr Tascona	1056
Mrs Marland	1057

Paramedics

Mr Martin	1057
Mr Stockwell	1057

School bus safety

Mr Hoy	1058
Mr Turnbull	1058

Emergency services

Mr Brown	1059
Mr Hudak	1059

PETITIONS

Northern health travel grant	
Mrs McLeod	1062
Mr Brown	1062, 1063

Karla Homolka

Ms Mushinski	1062
Mr O'Toole	1063
Mr Newman	1064
Mr Hastings	1065

Municipal restructuring

Mr Barrett	1063
------------	------

Occupational health and safety

Mr Christopherson	1064
-------------------	------

Driver examinations

Mr Barrett	1064
------------	------

SECOND READINGS

Ministry of Health and Long-Term

Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 23, Mrs Witmer	
Mr Newman	1066, 1075
Mr Young	1069
Mr Mazzilli	1071
Mr Spina	1072
Mrs McLeod	1073, 1075
Mr Christopherson	1074
Mrs Munro	1074
Mr Smitherman	1074
Debate deemed adjourned	1081

OTHER BUSINESS

Members' expenditures

The Speaker	1047
-------------	------

International Day of Disabled

Persons	
Mrs Johns	1047
Mr Peters	1048
Ms Churley	1049

Omnibus legislation

Mrs McLeod	1049, 1061
The Speaker	1050, 1062, 1065
Mr Bradley	1050
Mr Duncan	1050, 1060
Mr Klees	1060, 1062
Mr Christopherson	1061

continued overleaf



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 6 December 1999

Lundi 6 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 décembre 1999

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TORONTO COUNCIL

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): You will be glad to know that we have a new lottery in Ontario. Apart from all the casinos and all the slot machines, this new game is played at the government's will. The new game joins Ontario, Wintario, 649, 749 and all the other games, and it's called 22/44. The game started back some two years ago with the number of 44. Then, in a bizarre move by the government, it went to 56, then it went to 57, then it went to 58, just when they were thinking they were getting it right, and this without consulting the players.

Now two years later the government is still messing around with the numbers game, realizing that they didn't get it right. Now, totally frustrated, the government is telling the players to choose 22 or 44. The government, of course, may still make changes to the game without notification or participation, surprising everybody, and it may call it 66. The problem is that in this new game there won't be a winner. From 44 to 56 to 57 and 58, 22 or 44 or 66, millions of dollars were wasted, with no end in sight.

In the television debate of 1995, Mike Harris said that he was having problems with figures. Now we know why, and I wonder when he's going to get it right.

PHARMACEUTICAL RESEARCH

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I am pleased to rise in the House today to recognize the pharmaceutical sector, which has contributed significantly to research and development in Ontario. In October, along with a number of my colleagues from the Legislature, I had the pleasure of visiting the research and development facilities of some of Ontario's leading pharmaceutical companies.

The pharmaceutical sector accounts for 27 of Canada's top 100 companies investing in research and development. Among this group, Merck Frosst leads the way. In 1998, Merck Frosst spent \$308 million on research and development in Canada. When pharmaceutical companies choose to invest in Ontario, all Ontarians benefit. As our government strives to create a climate for greater job creation in an increasingly globalized marketplace, we need to work to ensure that our R

and D sector continues to expand. Such expansion will enable many of our best and brightest students and researchers to find meaningful jobs right here in Ontario.

With us in the members' gallery today is Jean-Michel Halfon, CEO of Pfizer Canada. This year, Pfizer is expected to spend \$10 million on research and development in Ontario, in addition to a \$10-million expansion to its facilities in Arnprior, where it plans to manufacture Aricept and Viagra.

Companies such as Merck Frosst, Eli Lilly, Glaxo Wellcome, AstraZeneca and Pfizer are contributing to make Ontario one of the best places in the world to live, work and raise our families, and they should be commended.

1340

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): It's no longer a secret: Ontario produces some of the best wine in the world, and standing above the pack are the wines of Essex county. With a climate and growing conditions comparable to that of Bordeaux, France, the warm Lake Erie air and excellent soil combine to create a unique, high-quality wine. Essex county is also home to Pelee Island, considered a wine region of its own, with a growing season up to a month longer than mainland Canada's most southerly regions and is the birth place of some of the finest wines in the world.

National and international competitions have shown and proven that Essex county wines can compete with any region for quality and value. With the holiday season upon us, why not take the opportunity to give an Essex county wine when visiting or as a gift, or introduce a friend to the sweet taste of the burgeoning icewine industry. Every day, more people discover the unique, award-winning flavour of ice wine.

I'm proud in my riding to have the wineries of Colio, Pelee Island, D'Angelo, home of the wine king in Ontario, and LeBlanc winery. Today I am particularly proud to have Zak LeBlanc, a page, and his parents Pierre and Lise LeBlanc, along with his sisters and brothers Martin, Marc and Sophie.

RAMADAN

Mr Bob Wood (London West): As many members of this house will know, one billion Muslims throughout the world will be observing a month of fasting during Ramadan, starting around December 8 this year. It is a

time for inner reflection, devotion to God and self-control. Muslims think of it as kind of tune-up for their spiritual lives. The third pillar or religious obligation of Islam, fasting, has many benefits, the most important of which is that it teaches self-control. Ramadan is also a time of intensive worship, reading of the Koran, giving charity, purifying one's behaviour and doing good deeds. Ramadan will end with the celebration of the feast of Eid Al-Fitr in about one month's time. At that time, Muslims will gather for prayers and then exchange presents and share alms with the needy so that all members of the community may be able to celebrate together.

I know I speak on behalf of all members of this House in extending greetings to the Muslim community of Ontario and in wishing them Ramadan Kareem and Eid Mubarak. These greetings, which in Arabic mean "May you have a month of giving and a blessed feast," speak to the central meaning of Ramadan.

SARAH THOMPSON

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I'm delighted to stand in my place today and pay special recognition to Mrs Sarah Thompson of Belleville. Sarah will be one of the four Ontario seniors selected to receive the International Year of Older Persons legacy award this afternoon.

Mrs Thompson, a lifelong athlete and record-breaking competitor, is an inspiration to us all. After a serious retina problem robbed her of much of her vision, Mrs Thompson registered with the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and was determined to make the best of her life. When a stroke left her partially paralyzed, she exercised every day until she regained all feeling in her affected areas.

With encouragement from her family and friends, Mrs Thompson began to train and enter competitions and games for the physically disabled. From regional meets Sarah quickly moved on to provincial and national levels, setting records at virtually every meet she attended. Sarah Thompson holds every Canadian record in the blind masters division in the 3,000-metre, the 100-metre dash, the long jump, discus, javelin and shot put. She has been a 10-time Canadian champion and has won gold medals in international powerlifting when she competed in Perth, Australia. It's important to point out that Sarah achieved the gold medal while competing against able-bodied female athletes of all ages. "I don't do it for praise or glory," Mrs Thompson recently stated. "I do it for myself."

I'm honoured to join with Sarah's husband and former Quinte MPP Doug Rollins this afternoon as Sarah is honoured with this special award. She's indeed an inspiration to us all.

CANCER PREVENTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Four years ago, the Ontario Task Force on the Primary

Prevention of Cancer tabled a report which highlighted the need for an action-based plan for the primary prevention of cancer.

Three and a half years ago, this House passed my resolution calling for the creation of a working committee which would establish realistic and measurable timetables for sunseting persistent toxic chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens. Yet, since that day, the Conservative government has done nothing.

A minister of this government once remarked that you need to create a crisis before this government will take action. Make no mistake: Environmentally caused cancer is a crisis facing this province. Since 1950, the number of people afflicted with cancer has increased by 55%. Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and multiple myeloma are up by 200%; testicular cancer is up by over 100%; breast cancer and colon cancer are up by 60%.

Dioxin is one of the more widely known and proven carcinogens we also carry, but still nothing has been done. This has been the result: A breast-fed infant receives its so-called "safe" lifetime level of dioxin within the first six months of his or her life.

I say again, environmentally caused cancer has become a crisis facing this province. I call on the government once again today to honour the passing of that resolution.

RIDE PROGRAM

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I rise today to let everyone know that the RIDE program is swinging into full gear in Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. In fact, the South Simcoe Police Service has already kicked off their holiday RIDE blitz, and the Barrie Police Service manned the RIDE in full force on Friday night.

I'm proud that our government is a strong supporter of RIDE and that Ontario now has the toughest drinking and driving laws in Canada. Police at RIDE checks in Barrie will pass out coupons, a Bell QuickChange card and a replica of the winning poster from the Don't Drink and Drive Contest created by six-year-old Mikhaela Gray. Businesses and our media are standing shoulder to shoulder with our government in support of RIDE in Barrie, and they include Roberts Collision, Rock 95, Barrie Advance, the Kozlov Centre and Kwik Copy Printing.

Drinking and driving is a violent criminal act. Mothers Against Drunk Driving say that 46% of drivers killed in car accidents have been drinking, and every day 311 people are injured because of impaired driving. That kind of carnage must stop, and the RIDE program will help bring those numbers down.

The Barrie Police Service will check 10,000 cars during the festive season and show zero tolerance for anyone caught driving while impaired. So a word to the wise on behalf of RIDE: If you want to drive and arrive, don't drink and drive.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Outrage across the province continues to grow regarding the Mike Harris Millennium Memento project. Sudbury student body president Ruwan Amaratunga summarized this outrage best when he said, "That this Harris government would spend money on these things after years of cutbacks in education and health care just doesn't make sense."

Ruwan is correct. That's why I launched the "return to sender" program in Sudbury on Friday. This anger at Mike Harris's misplaced priorities is not only confined to Sudbury. For example, parents and students from Ottawa-Carleton, Chatham-Kent, Windsor, London and Peterborough share in the frustration of this government's skewed priorities. For that reason, today my liberal colleagues are launching the "return to sender" program across Ontario.

If, as a parent or student, you're upset at this government's misplaced priorities, bring your book back to your IPP and tell him you want that person to bring it to Mike Harris. As Ms Blondeau, a parent with six children in our school system, said, "It's ridiculous that my kids will have six copies of this book, but they don't have atlases, dictionaries or spellers."

Here is an example of the anger that is out there: In five hours, 500 books came back to my office with the message, "Return to sender."

Interruption.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I want to remind those of you who are visiting us in the galleries that we have very strict rules for you. We are ever so pleased you are here, but we will not tolerate any kind of lapsing or demonstration of any sort.

350

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable member for donating these books back. We have schools that have asked for extra copies and this will be of great assistance.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, and I believe this is a point of order: It's my understanding that there will be abundant copies of this sent back from the people of Ontario with the sign, "Return to sender."

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

PAUL AND ANNE BURNHAM

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to recognize the outstanding volunteerism of two constituents, Paul and Anne Burnham.

The Burnhams have won the 1999 YMCA Peace Medal for their community involvement both locally and worldwide. While maintaining a family business, they have found time to volunteer at their children's schools, sports and church activities while organizing such North-

umberland United Way events as a bike-a-thon and the celebrity baking contest.

While serving as president of the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture, Paul Burnham, with his wife, has helped raise funds for the victims of the Manitoba flood, for the eastern Ontario ice storm and for Hurricane Mitch in Central America. They have supported the food grains bank and helped to educate students through the Field to Food program, and this past summer they gave their time to the Rural Ramble educational farm tour.

Last year Mr Burnham took his agricultural experience to Central America, where he and four other federation members assisted indigenous farmers in their agricultural practices. Further to this, Mr Burnham is past president and an active member of the Northumberland Soil and Crop Improvement Association. Mrs Burnham also has been instrumental by organizing the Northumberland Agricultural Awareness Committee.

I extend my best wishes to the Burnham family and commend them for their outstanding volunteer efforts in their community and beyond.

VISITORS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: There's a special group of retired seniors in the gallery. They are people who have helped to build this country and this city. They are retired members of Local 183 of the Laborers' International Union of Ontario. I'd like to welcome them here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member will know that is not a point of order, but we are indeed glad they are visiting us today.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd also like to recognize a group of students who travelled here this morning from Sarnia-Lambton, the OAC group from Sarnia.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The order of the House dated November 18, 1999, provides that "The standing committee on estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 59 and 61 no later than December 2, 1999."

The House not having received a report from the standing committee on estimates for certain ministries on Thursday, December 2, 1999, as required by the order of this House, pursuant to standing order 62(b) the estimates before the committee of the Office of the Premier, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry

of Health, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Clark, Brad
Colle, Mike

Duncan, Dwight
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Sergio, Mario
Skarica, Toni
Smitherman, George

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FEWER MUNICIPAL POLITICIANS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 RÉDUISANT LE NOMBRE DE CONSEILLERS MUNICIPAUX

Mr Clement moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to provide for the restructuring of four regional municipalities and to amend the Municipal Act and various other Acts in connection with municipal restructuring and with municipal electricity services / *Projet de loi 25, Loi prévoyant la restructuration de quatre municipalités régionales et modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités et diverses autres lois en ce qui a trait aux restructurations municipales et aux services municipaux d'électricité.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael D.

Hastings, John
Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Marland, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Maves, Bart
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Snobelen, John
Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed will please rise and be recognized by the clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.

Conway, Sean G.
Crozier, Bruce
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona

Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 33.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I may have understood the government House leader to indicate that he's prepared to split the bill. I wonder if that's the case.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: On the same terms and conditions as you offered on Thursday morning? Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. Do you have another point of order?

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Last week, my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan raised a point of order with respect to the omnibus nature of Bill 23, currently printed and before this House. The Speaker, in his ruling, cited concern but ruled that point of order out of order. The Speaker at that time indicated that the opportunity for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected. Evolving practice over the last several years has tended certainly to work against that.

The rights and privileges of all members of this House are undermined by the government's obvious desire to prevent meaningful debate either in the Legislature or among the general public. The government's time frame for dealing with this bill, and there must be several hundred pages of it, is before Christmas. In the minister's statement today that he'll be giving later, he'll be saying it has to be done with by the end of the year. By our count, there is not enough time to do it.

Various Speakers over time have referenced these types of bills and whether sufficient debate is allowed with regard to important public issues whether a bill is split or not.

Allow me to refer you to a ruling by the Honourable Lucien Lamoureux, Speaker of the federal House of Commons, as recorded in the Commons journals for January 26, 1971, page 284, which reads as follows: "There must be a point where we go beyond what is acceptable from a strictly parliamentary standpoint" ... even though "the government has followed these practices that have been accepted in the past, rightly or wrongly, but that we may have reached the point where we are going too far and that omnibus bills of this type seek ... too much," too quickly.

410

James Jerome, on May 11, 1977, further indicated some very deep concern about whether our practices in respect of bills do in fact provide a remedy to the very legitimate complaint of the honourable member that a bill of this kind gives the government under our practices the right to demand one decision on a number of quite different, although related, subjects."

While the Speaker last week expressed concern about the government's practices, he proposed no solution, nor in fact did the Speaker direct the House leaders of the three recognized parties to come up with a solution. In order to protect the rights and privileges of all members of the House, the official opposition respectfully requests more guidance from the Chair. We require a more definitive ruling, either with respect to the Chair's own ruling or directing that the House leaders of the three parties find a solution to this problem.

The government consistently uses its parliamentary majority to thwart any opportunity by the official opposition to meaningfully negotiate the way legislation is dispensed with in this House. This, coupled with changes to the standing orders over the past eight years that have been done by this government and the previous government, has undermined meaningful debate on questions of broad public importance. This is yet another example that in a few short House days, we're supposed to change the way the province is governed. That's wrong.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Speaker has no knowledge of the proposed timetable of his bill. In addition to its orderliness, I have not seen or read the bill and, since it has just been introduced, I don't believe you have either. I am not in a position to overrule the rule of the Speaker from last week.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In the minister's statement today, he proposed that this legislation will be passed by the end of this year. It's a very clear time reference which effectively limits our ability to debate. In the absence of any other declaration, I would invite you to read this statement instead of reading notes from the table.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to remind the member for Windsor-St Clair that in the passion of the moment, I may be a little bit forgiving. I may be even too forgiving. Whether you realize it or not, I am under a certain amount of duress today. I should be home in bed, but I'm not. But I think that your comments are not well received by this Chair.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask, sir, that you then defer the ruling to the Speaker who made the ruling on the original point of order that was placed before this House last Thursday.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll have to leave that to him.

I want to make it abundantly clear that there will be time, as the debate unfolds, for the types of arguments that you're making to be considered by the Speaker.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, may I speak on that point of order? Let's be clear about this. We all know that this bill is going to take

some period of time to print, won't be called for second reading until that printing is done, and therefore we can make those arguments with regard to whether or not the bill falls within the standing orders of this House.

Let me make it perfectly clear to you, Mr Speaker, that we offered the opposition the opportunity to split this bill, and they made the offer to me to do it before Christmas with five different bills. I was ready to accept that offer, but they turned it down.

Mr Duncan: On a point of information: Prior to today there were four bills and now, at last count, there is a number more than that. That being said, Mr Speaker, I would also like to bring to your attention a ruling by Speaker Jerome of the federal House, who found that on points of this nature the appropriate time for this type of decision is at first reading, when there's still an opportunity for the government to take back a bill and split it out if that's what the government wants to do.

The Deputy Speaker: This bill has been introduced; it has been distributed. It has not been printed yet, so that's why we will be entertaining those kinds of arguments in the future.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: First of all on the substantive matter at hand, I take your advice with regard to waiting until the bill is printed, and then I understand that it will be your recommendation to Speaker Carr that he hear submissions from all of us on the point of the appropriateness of this kind of omnibus bill to be tabled. I take your advice and suggestion seriously and will prepare for that. Perhaps if Speaker Carr could indicate to us prior to the day on which he deems it correct for us to deal with that, that would be most helpful.

Second, I just want to go on the record as stating that at the House leaders' meeting on Thursday there was not any kind of deal offered. There were discussions, there were offers of how we on the opposition benches might accommodate five different bills being introduced, but let's be clear that there was no offer that was made and therefore no offer rejected. The fact is that the government is doing exactly what they said they would do in the negation of any kind of agreement even though we offered to entertain those discussions.

The Deputy Speaker: I want to make it abundantly clear to the member that I'm not holding out a commitment on behalf of the Speaker. I just know that he's a fair and reasonable man, and that's probably the route he will take. I wanted to make that clear.

AUDIT AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing 9(c)(2) the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 12 am on December 6, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on December 7 and 9, 1999, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

1420

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to introduce a bill that, if passed, will ensure more efficient government and better accountability in municipal government in Ontario.

First and foremost, the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act will put an end to the continuous rounds of debate and discussion on governance in the regions of Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury.

As you know, over the past few months a special adviser has been tasked with determining how best to achieve lower taxes and fewer politicians, that will result in simpler, more efficient and more accountable local government in each of these areas. These four special advisers, Milt Farrow, David O'Brien, Glen Shortliffe and Hugh Thomas, have submitted their recommendations and I would like to thank them again publicly for all of their commitment and hard work.

Our government promised to review these recommendations as a priority. We promised we would move forward quickly. We had promised the people of these

four regions that change would be in place in time for the November 2000 elections.

Today, as promised, we are moving forward. Today I've introduced legislation that, if passed, will lead to lower taxes and fewer politicians in these four areas.

The regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk and its six local municipalities will be replaced by two new municipalities: the town of Haldimand and the town of Norfolk.

The regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth and its six local municipalities will be replaced by one city.

The regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton and its eleven local municipalities will be replaced by one city.

The regional municipality of Sudbury and its seven local municipalities will be replaced by one city, including nine geographic townships to the north and to the southeast.

These changes mean the number of municipalities in these four areas will be reduced from 34 to 5. The number of politicians will be cut from 254 down to 64. And the taxpayers could and will benefit substantially by saving more than \$95 million per year. That's on top of the \$25 million of administrative savings already achieved in Hamilton-Wentworth.

The new municipalities will be built on the best practices of progressive municipalities across North America. They will retain their strong, local identities and communities. Each will develop a new, solid economic base from which to work together to attract investment and create new jobs. They will be municipalities to help Ontario move forward in strength and competitiveness into the 21st century.

We know it is important that any change be seamless. So, should this legislation be passed, our government will establish transition boards to ensure service is not interrupted and that savings to taxpayers are found as soon as possible, while ensuring the transition to the new city is a smooth one.

We would also like to assure employees that if their municipality is dissolved, they would automatically become an employee of the new municipality if they are an employee on the day the municipality is dissolved.

This legislation also addresses further matters of reform. Since the new city of Toronto came into being two years ago, it has become apparent that at 58 members the council is too large and unwieldy. Despite the clear benefit for taxpayers of a smaller council, Toronto has not been able to exercise its power to bring council to a more efficient and more manageable level. The legislation we are introducing today will, if passed by the Legislature, allow the government to reduce the size of Toronto's council to 44 members and to create 44 wards.

It has always been our goal to bring about less government. As you know, when we were first elected we took the initiative to reduce our own numbers, realigning the boundaries and reducing the number of MPPs from 130 down to 103. This is saving taxpayers at least an estimated \$6 million a year.

Many municipalities have followed our lead. There are now 586 municipalities in Ontario, down from 815, and there are 1,059 fewer politicians. This means a savings of more than \$220 million per year.

Taxpayers have already seen the benefits of more efficient services, less overlap, less duplication and red tape and more accountability. We want to extend these same benefits to even more Ontarians. Therefore, this legislation, subject to the approval of the Legislature, would extend and improve existing provisions that allow for local government reform in counties and separate and northern municipalities.

The changes we are introducing today and hope to see enshrined in law by the end of the year would mean lower taxes, fewer politicians, and simpler, more efficient and more accountable local government. This is what Ontarians want, it is what they expect, and it's what they deserve. Our government will continue to work hard to make this happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Responses.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I think it's important to take some time now to shed the light of day on exactly what this government is proposing to do. This government is proposing that we decide on the restructuring fate of five separate and distinct Ontario communities and that we do that by means of one bill. They are proposing that we deal with Sudbury, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton and Haldimand-Norfolk, that we deal with five separate and distinct plans for restructuring, and that we do that by means of one bill. This government suggests that we deal with five separate communities, each with its own history, its own demographics, its own economy, its own culture, its own character and its own future, and that we do that by means of one bill. To confuse matters even more, this minister has decided to throw into the bill something about the regional chair being elected in Halton and something about transit in the city of Waterloo.

This government may think it's perfectly acceptable to decide on the fate of five separate Ontario communities at once and to throw in a few other things but the kitchen sink, but we on this side of the House happen to disagree. We think it's more important that we take the time, that we take the care and that we give the warranted attention and consideration to each of the communities affected by your bill. That means we need five separate bills.

We oppose this mega-bill. We oppose this mega-bill because it does an injustice to those people living in those communities that are affected by this bill. We're talking about the people living in Sudbury, the people living in Ottawa, the people living in Hamilton, the people living in Haldimand-Norfolk and the people living in Toronto, each of whom feel they are worthy of the due consideration that would come with a distinct and separate bill addressing their restructuring needs. We believe they should have their own debate, their own hearings, their own amendments, and we should be entitled to vote

on each and every one of those bills as a separate and important matter.

1430

It's important to understand that we oppose this megabill because it is robbing us on this side of the House of our democratic right to vote on each and every one of those bills, in keeping with the wishes and concerns expressed by the people living in the affected communities. It would seem to me that, after this government commissioned four separate reports, containing four separate sets of recommendations, the natural outgrowth from that should be four separate bills, one for each of those communities.

The government says that time is of the essence in this matter. Let's remind the government that it chose to wait five long months after the election before appointing its special advisers. This government should also be reminded that it sat only nine days during the first nine months of this year. And when it did decide to move forward on any particular piece of legislation, it decided to make as its own peculiar, idiosyncratic and distinct priority a squeeze bill—not municipal restructuring, but a squeeze bill.

This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation. The next thing you know, this government is going to introduce omnibus education legislation that puts a little bit of money into the classroom at the same time that it offers a voucher system. We will not buy into that sort of approach by supporting this bill. We will not set a precedent that gives the government the green light to continue to ram omnibus bills down our throats. We want the bill split to allow separate votes on each piece of legislation.

In addition to demanding that this government split this bill, I have an additional outrageous request. We want just a few hours of public hearings. We know that involves a couple of things that you on the government side of the House don't understand, and that's the need to involve our public, that's the need to listen to the public. I want you all to say it with me slowly now: public hearings. "Public hearings"; those two words go together nicely if you believe in true democracy, if you recognize that public input is one of the tools that make for good legislation and if you really believe in tools, instead of the same old-fashioned, Tory sledgehammer approach to legislation in Ontario.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I was told that the minister likes to call himself Mr Referendum, that he likes to believe that local people should make decisions, that there should be local democracy. Isn't it interesting that when this minister becomes the Minister for Municipal Affairs, he believes that referenda are irrelevant, that you simply slam it down people's throats, that they should have no say in their local government, no say in how their services are provided or, in this case, how their services are going to be cut.

It would appear that this minister is only in favour of local democracy, only in favour of referenda when it suits his neo-conservative agenda, when it's in line with

something the Reform Party or the Ontario Conservative Party wants to push; otherwise, people shouldn't have a say. Because that's what's happening here. This minister, who claims to be all-seeing and all-knowing, is going to decide how more than a million and a half people are going to be governed, and they are going to have no say in this whatsoever. If you include the provisions with respect to the city of Toronto, it means over three million people are being told how they're going to be governed, how their services are going to be cut, in some cases how their property taxes are going to be increased, and they're going to have no say in it whatsoever.

Let's get to what this is really all about: This government wants to continue to download onto municipalities. They want to continue to put off the costs of ambulances, the costs of child care, the costs of housing for senior citizens, the costs of urban transportation, the costs of public health onto municipalities, with no additional revenue for those municipalities. They want to do that, but they want to create enough confusion, enough instability so that people can't see clearly what is happening. That's what this is all about.

Just as we saw two weeks ago, when the government said they were going to save \$300 million in administration. What it turned out to be is another \$56-million download onto municipalities—no new money for municipalities, but lots of new responsibilities.

What are those municipalities going to have to do? They've got two choices. They can either raise property taxes and user fees to provide those necessary services, or they can cut. But we read in the fine print of this that you're even going to limit that choice for municipalities. You're simply going to force them to cut the services that ordinary people across this province need.

Where is the proof of this? Look at what is already happening in the city of Toronto. The Toronto Transit Commission is in big trouble. They don't have the money they need to operate and to provide the good services. Social housing and affordable housing is in trouble. Public health is in trouble. The services that ordinary people need in our communities are being cut.

This strategy that we see here today, this nonsense where all this legislation has to be passed before Christmas, is all part of that strategy. This is a government that gives the wealthiest people in the province a tax break, but then it takes away the services that the average family needs. They think this is justice. They think this is the way of the future. Shame on them. Shame on them for paying so little attention to the needs of our cities, the needs of communities and the needs of our families.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to comment on the latest farce from the minister in terms of the Toronto restructuring. I want to remind the people of Ontario that this province passed Bill 103, giving the city power over how many wards it would have. Remember, they spent literally a year and a half deciding this, including going to the OMB and the whole bit. Remember too, mon ami M. Gilchrist last year said,

"This is up to the city to decide, not us." That was mon ami M. Gilchrist, but I suppose that was then.

Then, all of a sudden, my good friend the Minister of Municipal Affairs comes in, out of the blue, blundering forth and saying to the city council, "You've got 48 hours to decide on how you're going to downsize yourself again." I tell you what: He wants another consultation but he doesn't say for how long. If I were a city councillor, I'd be worried because I'd wake up one day and find that the minister has decided for them.

This is the farce played on the city of Toronto that we've got to deal with.

DAY OF REMEMBRANCE AND ACTION ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent for each party to speak about the Montreal massacre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there consent? Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: It is indeed with a heavy heart that I rise today to remember 14 women who were killed at L'École polytechnique in Montreal on December 6, 1989, 10 years ago today. Today is the 10th annual National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.

We know that the massacre in Montreal was not a random act of violence. We know that the assassin was lashing out at a changing world where women were assuming full and equal partnership with men. And we know that when he entered the classroom where Maud Haviernick and Michèle Richard were delivering their end-of-term presentation, he separated the women students from the men students and then he opened fire only on the women. The feminists, he claimed, had ruined his life. We know this and today we remember.

1440

In the 10 years since that day that changed us forever the killer has become a household name. His name is better known than many of our most accomplished scientists, athletes and artistic figures, yet most Canadians would be at a loss to name even one of those women. Today we honour the lives and the memories of 14 women who died on December 6, 1989.

Geneviève Bergeron was a second-year scholarship student in civil engineering and an accomplished musician. Had she lived, she would be 31 years old today.

Hélène Colgan was in her final year of mechanical engineering studies and she had received three job offers. Had she lived, she would be 33 years old today.

Nathalie Croteau was due to graduate in mechanical engineering and she was planning to take a two-week vacation in Cancun, Mexico, with friends at the end of the month. Had she lived, today she would be 33 years old.

Barbara Daigneault worked as a teaching assistant for her father, a mechanical engineering professor, and was to have graduated at the end of 1989. Had she lived, she would be 32 years old.

Anne-Marie Edward spoke four languages, loved outdoor sports and was always surrounded by friends. Had she lived, she would be 31.

Maud Haviernick was a second-year student in engineering materials and a graduate in environmental design from the University of Quebec in Montreal. Had she lived, she would be 39 years old.

Barbara Maria Klucznik was in second-year engineering and specializing in engineering materials. Had she lived, she would be 41.

Maryse Laganière worked in the budget department at École polytechnique and had just recently married. Had she lived, she would be 35 years old.

Maryse Leclair was a fourth-year metallurgy student and was one of l'École polytechnique's top students. Had she lived, she would be 33 years old.

Anne-Marie Lemay was in her fourth year of mechanical engineering. Had she lived, she'd be 37.

Sonia Pelletier, the head of her class, died the day before she was to graduate with a degree in mechanical engineering and had a job interview lined up for the following week. Had she lived, she'd be 38.

Michèle Richard was in her second year of studying engineering materials. She had delivered an end-of-term paper with Maud Haviernick when the gunman burst into her room. Had she lived, she'd be 31 years old.

Annie St-Arneault, a mechanical engineering student, was killed as she sat listening to a presentation in her last class before graduation. She had a job interview scheduled for the next day. Had she lived, she'd be 33.

Annie Turcotte was in her first year of studies and shared a small apartment with her brother. Had she lived, she would be 31 years old.

Had they lived, Mr Speaker.

So 10 years later, if there is any comfort to be found as we reflect on the tragedy and the lives that were lost, it is that the gunman may have achieved the exact opposite of what he had intended. Where he hoped to frighten and intimidate, he merely strengthened resolve. The absolute number of women in the engineering faculties of this country has more than doubled in the 10 years since that tragedy. The engineering profession and university faculties have worked diligently to create a climate which is more hospitable to women.

All of us have become more aware of the threat that violence against women and resistance to women's accomplishments presents in each of our daily lives, and we resolve to do all we can to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again.

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : Comme la ministre a dit, il y a déjà 10 ans depuis que Marc Lépine est entré à l'École polytechnique de Montréal où il a semé la terreur et la mort. Il avait décidé que le 6 décembre 1989 serait le jour qu'il se débarrasserait de ses ennemies : des femmes qui lui gênaient la vie.

Dix ans plus tard, sous le thème de se souvenir pour agir, « remembering in order to take action, » nous commémorons le massacre des 14 femmes tuées par Marc Lépine, tuées parce qu'elles étaient des femmes. Nous nous souvenons qu'une mort violente a mis terme aux vies de 14 femmes et a mis terme à leurs espoirs, leurs rêves, leurs ambitions. Nous nous souvenons que ces femmes étaient des étudiantes douées, qu'elles allaient devenir des ingénieures ; mais avant tout, nous nous souvenons qu'elles étaient des filles, des sœurs, nièces, petites-filles et amies. Elles sont mortes subitement, dans la violence, par la main d'un homme qui croyait que des femmes indépendantes et ambitieuses étaient dangereuses et menaçantes.

Il m'est toujours inconcevable que 14 jeunes femmes aient perdu leur vie à cause de leur sexe féminin et de l'étiquette apposée par le meurtrier, l'étiquette de « féministes ».

In the months following the massacre there was a great public debate. Violence against women was the topic of the hour. The debate took the place of a profound dialogue on the issue of violence in society, in particular violence against women. Instead of provoking discussion, raising awareness of the real issues and generating solutions, the debate centred on whether the Montreal massacre was an isolated incident, a violent aberration, or whether it was another symptom of a sick society.

In my mind, there is no future in such a debate. Despite public debate and outcry, we have not succeeded in eliminating violence against women—not globally, not in North America, not in Canada, not even in Ontario. Despite the increase in demand, funding for shelters, second-stage housing and rape crisis centres has been drastically cut. Despite countless recommendations made by women's groups regarding the need for essential community-based programs, funding to these programs has been cut. Despite recommendations made by coroners following inquests into the violent deaths of Ontarian women at the hands of their partners, the system is still failing to protect women from men with a well-known history of violent behaviour. Despite public support and demand for stronger gun control legislation, this government still intends to fight the federal gun control law in the Supreme Court.

Lors de l'inauguration à Montréal hier du monument commémoratif qui porte le nom de Nef pour 14 reines, les familles des victimes se sont rassemblées sous un ciel sombre et une pluie triste. Dix ans plus tard, chaque membre de ces familles vivait encore une douleur vive. Néanmoins, c'est un message d'espoir qu'elles ont lancé. Les familles espèrent que la nef devienne une place de réflexion sur la violence faite aux femmes. « Il ne faut pas oublier, » a dit la mère d'une des victimes, « mais il faut regarder vers l'avenir. »

In Ontario, like in Quebec, we will remember. Now let's act.

First of all, let's listen to the women. Only they can tell us their needs. They have solutions to propose to the government and to legislators.

Ensuite, travaillons ensemble pour bâtir la société dont nous parlons depuis toujours; une société juste où tous, femmes, enfants et hommes, demeurent équitablement dans la justice et la paix.

In closing, I encourage every one of you to light a candle tonight in memory of the 14 women who lost their lives on December 6, 1989, at l'École polytechnique de Montréal. As you light the candles, reflect on their futures, futures that due to an act of senseless violence were snuffed out like the flames of the candles you hold.

1450

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Ten years ago today, 14 young women were murdered at École polytechnique in Montreal; 14 bright lights were extinguished. It was the tragic event in the history of this nation. Those 14 women were executed because the gunman saw them as a threat, the object of his rage.

I remember that day well. I imagine there is not one of us in this Legislature who does not remember that day and the days that followed: the shock, the vigil, the tears. I think that for many people that day marked the beginning of some kind of awakening, some recognition that we all have a responsibility in this.

But there were those then and still today who dismiss this crime as a horrible, random act by a deranged man and therefore should not be talked about in the same breath as violence against women. In many ways, that's understandable. Because it's safer for us to think that way and because it absolves men from taking any ownership or responsibility.

The outcome of this act was a horrible massacre of 14 women. But such threats to women are, indeed, very common. Let me tell you something that happened to me as a female Toronto city councillor shortly after the Montreal massacre 10 years ago. I don't think I've ever told anybody this story, because after these women died, it wasn't about me, it was about them. But I'm going to tell the story today, because I've heard from so many other women who are now telling stories of what happened to them.

I was the chair of the Toronto cycling committee as a cyclist and I brought forward a motion to city council to allow equal prize money—that was all—for women racers, to be phased in over a number of years.

The motion passed at city council and then the harassment began. I started to get death threats on my telephone at home, words like: "Marilyn Churley, you are going to die. You're a feminist and I hate you." Then the ultimate shock was when I started to get threatening graphic notes through my door, which was unlisted, telling me what that person, had it been the same person, would like to do to me. I can tell you, because I suppose it was so soon after the Montreal massacre and similar words were used, I spent a number of days being absolutely terrified. I was a member of city council. Security was called, and for a number of days, I was under protection.

I tell that story simply to let those people who dismiss this as a random act of violence—seldom is it taken that

far, thank God—know that those threats do happen to women frequently.

We have a responsibility to the women who were murdered and to all the women who remain. We have a responsibility to our daughters, our friends, our mothers, our sisters, our aunts and our neighbours. We need to teach our children. We need to ensure that events like the one in Montreal on December 6, 1989, are never forgotten—which is partly what this is all about today—and never repeated.

I want my grandson, and other grandchildren to follow, to learn at school the names of these women, the same way they would learn the names of the prime ministers of this country. We must never forget. We need to root out both violence and the attitudes that allow women to be second-class citizens, attitudes that sometimes cause women to be victims in society rather than equal participants. We need to ensure that children who are the survivors of violence and who witness violence in the home are provided with the counselling and support that will ensure they do not grow up to repeat those acts of violence as Marc Lépine did.

Today, once again, I participated in a heartbreaking ceremony where I joined with my colleagues from both parties, and others, to remember the 14 young women who were shot that terrible day 10 years ago. Once again I held a red rose, representing the life of one of the women who died. Her name was called and I walked to a vase and put that rose in, along with 13 other red roses, each rose representing a life. This year I held in my hand the memory of Maud Haviernick. I thought of that young woman then, the one represented by my rose. I imagined her before that day, and just before the horrible incident, full of energy and promise, bright-eyed and full of life as she prepared to become an engineer. I thought of her parents and her family, and the unimaginable anguish and agony they must have experienced and the grief and pain and horror they must feel to this day.

I think of all of the women who have been murdered and terrorized by their spouses, partners and ex-partners and how very much I want, as we all want, our own daughters to be free of sexual harassment and free of the fear of violence from men. Government has a role of paramount importance. As I said, if nothing else, we must learn from this tragic event.

Today we are remembering the women who were shot, but it is necessary to point out that violence against women has not decreased in those 10 years, as some crimes indeed have. Since Arlene May died on March 8, 1996, at least 77 women in Ontario have died under similar circumstances, and at least 33 women have died since the inquest jury released its 213 recommendations. This weekend, we know that at least one other woman's name was added to that list. Countless others are severely injured and harassed.

In closing, I would like to read a portion of the mission statement of the White Ribbon Campaign that describes violence against women:

"If it were between countries, we'd call it a war. If it were a disease, we'd call it an epidemic. If it were an oil spill, we'd call it a disaster. Violence against women in our society is all of those things."

In the days following the murder in Montreal, women across this country adopted a motto. When we stand in silence to remember, we should remember those words: First mourn, then work for change."

Mr Speaker, I would ask for unanimous consent for us all to stand for a moment of silence to remember the 14 women who died 10 years ago.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Premier.

Just a few moments ago, your minister stood up in this House and spoke in a very moving and compelling way about the importance of drawing whatever lessons we might concerning the Montreal massacre that occurred 10 years ago. She concluded her statement, and I jotted this down because I thought it was very significant, by saying we must "resolve to do all that we can to prevent such a tragedy from ever happening again."

Premier, why is it that you continue to fight gun control legislation in the courts? Why is it that you continue to thwart the will of the overwhelming majority of Ontarians who favour gun control, including our police?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the question and I'm sure it's brought forward with the best of intentions in a very serious matter.

We stand firmly in support of gun control, as the member knows and as this Legislature knows, and we have continued to proffer that position. We have consistently over our tenure as government offered suggestions on stronger gun controls for illegal guns, on stronger penalties for those who use guns illegally, on more enforcement to deal with this very serious situation.

As the member knows, there is a growing plethora, I would say, of people—law enforcement officers and others—very concerned about the terrible waste of money and the tragic way the federal government has gone about gun control. We think those dollars could be far better spent, with far more effective gun control both for illegal guns and for legal guns used illegally.

1500

Mr McGuinty: You will know that close to half a dozen coroners' inquests have concluded with recommendations being put forward by their juries that we adopt gun control legislation in Ontario.

In March 1996, Randy Iles went into an Ontario gun shop and bought a gun. At that time he was in a relationship with Arlene May. There were outstanding warrants for his arrest and he was in possession of an invalid firearms acquisition certificate. Later that day, this man murdered Arlene May before turning the gun on himself. If the federal gun law, the one that is before the courts today had been in place, Randy Iles would have been prohibited from making the purchase of that gun that he used that day to kill Arlene May.

Premier, once more, why do you stand against gun control legislation, which is endorsed by our police, which is endorsed by our victims' rights groups right here in Ontario, including CAVEAT? Why do you stand in the way of the will of Ontario people to pass a law in our province called the federal gun control law?

Hon Mr Harris: As I said in my opening response, we are four-square behind meaningful gun control. I know many, including police chiefs and police officers, are disappointed by the disgrace that has been brought forward by the government in Ottawa. We continue to want to make it meaningful gun control. Many of the groups that were in support of the principle have been so disappointed with the waste of money, with the boondoggle, I would say, under the guise of gun control.

If the honourable member is absolutely serious, as opposed to playing petty politics, which is what the leader does with most issues, I'd be happy to work with him. We'll go to Ottawa together and get meaningful gun control in this country.

Mr McGuinty: The Premier's true colours are finally shining through. He loves to make wonderful and eloquent speeches written by his overpaid staff about victims' rights, but he refuses to listen to victims' rights groups. He claims he's an advocate for victims but he refuses to listen to the groups. Those groups have made a number of statements, on an ongoing basis, asking this Premier to endorse and support the federal gun control legislation. But this Premier, in a very consistent way, refuses to do that, notwithstanding support offered for this very same legislation by the police and victims' rights groups. So far, this law in Canada has kept 1,000 guns out of the hands of people who should never have had them; 1,000 applicants have been turned down so far under existing gun control legislation.

Premier, when are you going to finally and effectively stand up for victims in Ontario by supporting a bill they're asking that you adopt and support 100%?

Hon Mr Harris: I suppose I would have to say that on this day when we are dealing with the tragedy of enormous proportions, all three parties in a non-partisan sense, not only the Liberal leader but Liberal MPP Michael Bryant, who issued a press release, would try and politicize this tragic situation.

Clearly our government recognizes the need to be vigilant about violence against women. We have taken concrete action such as increasing the violence against women prevention budget by over 13%. We've opened six new domestic violence courts, which gives Ontario

the largest domestic violence court program in the country.

As for opposition to the federal gun control law, it is worth noting that we have never been against the licensing of guns. If the federal government took the money they're wasting, which is now being acknowledged even by some victims' groups as being a terrible waste, if they would seriously look at effective gun control—and if you're serious, not just cheap partisan politics, I'd welcome to go with you—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My second question is for the Premier. Premier, Mr Shortliffe put forward a number of recommendations dealing with the area of Ottawa-Carleton. One of those specific recommendations was that that new city be designated bilingual, with the eminently reasonable proviso that bilingualism be available where numbers warrant. There is no mention of that recommendation in your legislation. Can you tell us, Premier, why is it that you have decided that you are not going to proceed with Mr Shortliffe's recommendation to make the new city of Ottawa bilingual where numbers warrant?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As you know, we are providing bilingual services in the Ottawa-Carleton area, and this bill proposes we continue to do so and then allow the new city something called local autonomy, which you people do not agree with, to resolve in the future how best to do that.

I find it passing strange that a leader of a political party that campaigned on this legislation, said he would do it, said he's in favour of it, when the time comes to show leadership, is actually opposed to the whole principle of the legislation, voted against the introduction of the legislation, exactly as he campaigned to do. All this bluster and all this nonsense can't cover up the fact that you are a weak leader who does not have the courage to follow through on commitments.

Mr McGuinty: Just so the record is perfectly clear, I made a commitment during the campaign to move forward with an Ottawa bill, and I made a campaign commitment to move forward with a Hamilton bill. You have not introduced an Ottawa bill today, and you have not introduced a Hamilton bill today; you've introduced an Ottawa-Hamilton-Toronto-Haldimand-Norfolk-and-Sudbury bill today. That's what you've introduced here today. There is no Ottawa bill and there is no Hamilton bill before this Legislature.

I want to return to the question at hand, Premier, because we believe that we are unveiling a pattern in this House which means there's nobody on that side who's standing up for the rights of francophones in Ontario, including your minister. I'm going to give you another opportunity, Premier. Why is it that you have not proceeded with Mr Shortliffe's recommendation to

recognize the unique characteristics of Ottawa-Carleton by ensuring that there is, as part of your legislation, a provision that says that the new city of Ottawa will be deemed to be bilingual where numbers warrant? Why have you not adopted that recommendation?

Hon Mr Harris: No thanks to your vote, a flip-flop from what you campaigned on, we'll have an opportunity to debate this legislation. We will have an opportunity, even after 25 years of discussion, for yet more public hearings, because we on this side of the House are committed to having public hearings on this legislation as well.

Finally, I just want to reiterate that all of this nonsensical blustering cannot cover up the fact that in the Legislature today, the members on this side of the House voted as they told their constituents they would vote, except for the Liberal party, except for those from Hamilton, and except—shame of all shames—the leader of the Liberal Party, who proved what the voters sensed: that he's not up to the job.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Final supplementary.

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: I see, Speaker, that the seals are in fine form today.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. You may wonder why—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm probably going to tell you, whether you're wondering or not.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. You may wonder why I don't stop the clock when there's a lot of noise, and I'm going to tell you why. Because I would rather reward good behaviour.

Last supplementary from the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr McGuinty: To help jog the Premier's very short memory, I will remind him that the position taken by Mr Skarica, Mr Clark, Mr Baird, Mr Guzzo, Mr Sterling and Mr Coburn had nothing to do with the bill that you have introduced in this House today. We had the guts and we had the decency to put a position on the record prior to and during the course of the election. You deliberately chose to hide your intentions from the Ontario public.

The Deputy Speaker: Question.

Mr McGuinty: You deliberately decided not to reveal to Ontarians, and in particular the four communities affected—you deliberately chose to hide from them exactly what your intentions were. We had the guts to put on the record exactly what we planned to do, when we were going to do it and how we were going to do it.

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: Just settle down; I'm not done.

The Deputy Speaker: Question.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Minister.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Clearly, what we have today is following, on August 23, the announcement by the Minister of Municipal Affairs that we would support restructuring for Ottawa-Carleton, Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand-Norfolk and Sudbury. On August 24, there was a press release that said, "Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty supports the one-city concept for Ottawa." In this press release, "McGuinty pledges the Ontario Liberal Party will facilitate the introduction of single-city legislation as soon as possible."

Clearly, all this bluster today is due to the fact that the leader of the Liberal Party now voted against what he campaigned on and voted against what he said on August 24, which is why the public of this province really did sense you're not up to the job.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Today we remember the 14 young women who were murdered at the University of Montreal by Marc Lépine. Since that date we've learned something about the background of Marc Lépine. We've learned that he grew up in a very violent home, that he himself was frequently beaten by his father, that he witnessed his mother being beaten by his father. Premier, here in Ontario your government has totally eliminated the funding for counselling services that used to be provided to children who come from violent homes. My question to you today is this: Will you, in remembrance of those 14 young women who were murdered, restore that funding so that children in Ontario who grow up in violent homes will receive the kind of counselling they need so that this cycle of violence is not repeated?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the question, and the minister may wish to respond. But let me, by way of initial response, indicate that we have increased funding to deal with violence against women; we've increased it in all categories. Since the release of the government's Agenda for Action, more than 40 new initiatives in the area of safety, justice and prevention have helped meet the needs of abused and assaulted women in Ontario, and our initiatives were based on the recommendations that were made by a panel on violence against women in Canada.

You may disagree with specific details of how we spend more money on this challenge. Clearly, nobody has the definitive answer, but we would welcome any meaningful input into assisting our government in what I think is a non-partisan, three-party, unanimous commitment to the province and the citizens of Ontario that we must do more.

1520

Mr Hampton: I'm aware that your government has made some announcements on the law enforcement side. I'm aware that you've made some announcements with respect to crown attorneys. But we're talking here about children, and we're talking about something that everyone knows. It has been found in study after study in

western Europe, the United States and Canada that children who grow up in violent homes, children who experience violence themselves or experience violence against their mother, in an overwhelming number of cases, repeat that. It is called the cycle of violence.

I'm talking here about a very specific thing. When you became the government, you cut \$2.6 million from second-stage housing, women's crisis centres. That \$2.6 million used to provide for counselling services for those children so we could break the cycle of violence.

I'm saying to you, remember those 14 young women who were murdered. Restore the funding so the cycle of violence is not repeated by young children who grow up in violent homes in Fort Frances, or in Ontario. Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: We want to do far more than that. I don't think anybody would think \$2.5 million would have prevented the tragedy that took place in Montreal, and I think we are recognizing that today. It is not just \$2.5 million; we're spending many, many more millions of dollars than that. If you wish specifics, I have three ministers who all want to respond that in all the areas they are investing far more dollars to deal exactly with this challenge that we are faced with.

I would welcome that input. Perhaps if you would like, we'd be happy to chat on areas where we can have an even greater impact in the future.

Mr Hampton: There are organizations which have been trying to give your government this advice. For example, the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses made that information available to your government.

I don't deny that your government has issued a lot of press releases talking about the law enforcement side of this. What we're talking about is breaking the cycle-of-violence side, ensuring that children who grow up in those kinds of homes, who witness their mother being beaten, who are beaten themselves, receive the counselling they need.

The reality is that your government cut the funding for second-stage housing, which is where that counselling happened. That's where those children received that intensive counselling over a period of time.

It's a very simple request, Premier: Will you restore the \$2.5 million that you cut and that took away those counselling services? I think that is how we ensure that we break the cycle of violence in Ontario communities, that we put an end to this. Will you do that, Premier? It's a very simple request: \$2.5 million in annualized funding to restore second-stage housing and the counselling services that go along with it.

Hon Mr Harris: It's amazing how you think \$2.5 million is going to solve this problem. We have increased by 13% this very specific budget to deal with prevention of violence against women, so we are putting more money there. We've dealt with crisis intervention support. We've dealt with justice services. We've dealt with education, prevention.

In 1997 we announced the Agenda for Action, a framework. We've put 27 million new dollars over four years, allocated to support implementation of the strategy. We have put 170 million new dollars into child welfare. We have brought in a new risk assessment system. So you're several hundred million dollars too late to ask for \$2.5 million.

But I would say this: We welcome your concern and your input, and if it's more than just politics, I'm sure we can work together to do even more in the future.

MUNICIPAL REFERENDA

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is also to the Premier. Premier, it's about children and it's about counselling for children. I would hope you would sit down with your ministers and look at that.

But I want to ask you now about your government's position with respect to referenda. You have said and several of your ministers have said that you believe in local decision-making, that you believe that citizens should be consulted, that citizens should have a say. But here today, Premier, you intend to dramatically change the government which touches citizens the most, the local government, for over three million people, and we can't find anywhere in this legislation where you're prepared to let them have a say.

Premier, since you say that you philosophically believe in referenda, that you believe in letting people have a say, why won't you let the people of Sudbury, of Hamilton, of Ottawa-Carleton, Haldimand-Norfolk and the city of Toronto have a say about your legislation? Will you do that, Premier?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As you know, the people have been having their say for the last 25 or 30 years in most of these communities. The process we put in place was 100% local.

We consulted with local people, politicians and citizens alike. The legislation introduced today actually does deal with referenda, something that you very much opposed. I'm surprised you're asking for it today.

Mr Hampton: No, Premier, I'm the one who said you should have a referendum on the restructuring of urban government in the city of Toronto and I very much supported it. I would support allowing people to have a say here before you, in one fell swoop, reorganized the government of three million people. Yes, Premier, there's some language in here about referenda, but it's not a language about letting people have a say; it's language that is going to restrict those municipal governments in the future if they try to deal with your downloading of costs and services on them.

Premier, why is it OK, why do you want to have a referendum, when municipalities have to change taxes or increase taxes to deal with your downloading—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Question?

Mr Hampton:—but when you cut their services, they can't have a referendum, and when you totally take over

their government they can't have a referendum? Why is a referendum OK when it suits your agenda, but when it really involves letting local people have a say in what you're doing, you're opposed to local democracy?

Hon Mr Harris: The question is based upon a premise that we have cut services. We have cut not one single municipal service. In fact, we've facilitated the enhancement of municipal services. I think the record speaks for itself that in two years, non-election years in municipalities, if you look at the pattern, it's generally significant tax increases in non-election years and then in an election year maybe holding the line.

If you look at the municipal tax levy for the past two years, non-election years, you'll find it's the lowest in recent history, certainly in Ontario and probably since the war, and far less than when your government and the Liberal government downloaded on municipalities, causing all those tax increases in the first place. So the premise of the question really does not stand the scrutiny of any objective measures.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Premier. I'm glad to see that you're reading my comments to the media and I don't mind you impugning my intention in the House, but let me also say this, Mr Premier: I'm not going to be afraid to honour the victims of the Montreal massacre, I am not going to be afraid to stand up for victims who support the Firearms Act and I'm certainly not going to be afraid to stand up against the gun lobbyists who are positively in bed with this government today.

Mr Premier, you should talk to the Attorney General, who is taking a very different position in court than you are taking in this House. The Attorney General says nothing about the costs and says everything about the provincial government having responsibility and jurisdiction over this area, so let me give you the opportunity: Are you willing to honour the victims of the Montreal massacre by establishing a provincial gun registry in the event that you are successful in having judges overturn the will of parliament and destroy a national gun control registry that is saving lives as we speak?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Attorney General can respond.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I was unaware that the Premier of Saskatchewan was a gun lobbyist, according to the member from St Paul's.

I will say to the member from St Paul's that to say in a press release, as he apparently did today, that the Ontario government is marking the 10th anniversary of the Montreal massacre by challenging the very legislation instigated by the tragic event at Montreal's l'École polytechnique on December 6, is an inappropriate comment, at least, on his part.

I would have thought it beneath the member for St Paul's to relate constitutional litigation that has been on-

ing since 1996 in this country and that is going to be heard next year in the Supreme Court of Canada, with respect to which a number of provinces are involved—to quote that litigation in the Supreme Court of Canada to a tragedy like the Montreal massacre I would think would lie beneath the member for St Paul's.

530

Mr Bryant: Minister, if I had wanted an answer from the Reform Party justice critic, I would have asked him, but I'd like an answer from the Ontario Attorney General on an Ontario question.

You're not going to create a registry because this is a government that puts guns in the hands of 12-year-olds. This is a government that would have 16-year-olds able to purchase a gun without a background check, and that's the way the old regime worked. This is a government that thinks a squeegee is more dangerous than a gun.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the member for Brampton Centre to withdraw that.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I just want it withdrawn or not. I don't want a debate.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I withdraw, speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for St Paul's.

Mr Bryant: There have been in this riding in which we've seen six murders since the election in June. None of the murders involved a squeegee, I can assure you. All of the murders involved a gun, I can assure you. Yet this government wants to strike down legislation that in fact would take guns out of the hands of spousal abusers and guns out of the hands of criminals. So whose side are you on? Is it the side of the police or is it the side of the gun lobby? Just give me an answer, Minister.

My question is this: If you're successful in your constitutional litigation, in place of the national gun registry that you're trying to strike down, will you replace it with a provincial gun registry that will save lives? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Flaherty: It is a shame that the member opposite would use the 10th anniversary of the Montreal massacre as an opportunity to try to convince the people of Ontario into thinking that a bureaucratic response like the federal Firearms Act would actually increase the safety of people in Ontario. Having bureaucrats filling out forms and filing papers does not help to control the illegal use of guns.

Let me make it clear how seriously we take the issue of violence, including domestic violence in Ontario. I don't need lectures from the Liberal benches after listening to the federal justice minister for three days last week refusing to increase sentences in this country, refusing to repeal the discount law, refusing to amend the Criminal Code to prohibit conditional sentences for violent offenders in this country, refusing to repeal section 745, the faint hope clause in the Criminal Code, and refusing to give us an effective youth justice system so that we can somehow try to combat the serious rise in violent youth crime in this country, which is a serious problem.

ACADEMIC TESTING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Education. Last week the Toronto District School Board released detailed results of the EQAO testing that was done last year. Every school board across the province participated in these tests, this being the second year that grade 3 tests have been reported and the first year for grade 6 in this province.

This year students were assessed in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics, and I'm proud to say that Manhattan Park Junior Public School in my riding finished second in grade 6 testing among all the schools in Toronto.

Minister, can you tell us why this government has chosen to institute these province-wide standardized tests?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I thank the honourable member from Scarborough Centre for the question, because I know she cares very deeply and has been watching very carefully as the schools in her community have been seeking to produce excellence in their students. As she notes, some of them are doing a very good job.

That is our goal: to have excellence in our education system. One way we do that is by improving the curriculum: what is taught in the schools, what students are expected to learn. This is the first comprehensive change in the curriculum, building grade by grade on what students learn, since Egerton Ryerson set up our public system, and it's a very important improvement. The other day a director of education who has been in the sector for 38 years said it's the most significant quality improvement he had seen in his career.

But that's not the only step. We have the new curriculum, and it's being phased in. We have to make sure we are teaching it well and that the students are learning it, and that's why we have the testing process. The EQAO has been working very hard with teachers to make sure those tests are valid and are measuring what we want to measure. We've been very pleased to see boards like the Toronto board, which have put in place their turnaround plans. We can certainly see the results of that in their tests.

Ms Mushinski: Quite clearly this government is committed to improving the quality of the education system, and the new challenging curriculum, along with the use of standardized testing, will help us reach the goal of excellence in education throughout Ontario, something that Manhattan Park Junior Public School has already achieved. The Toronto District School Board reports that this year's results show there is some improvement over last year.

Minister, what are the next steps for improving the public education system in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: There's no question that the Toronto board has taken these test results very seriously. An article in the Toronto Star, for example, talks about new

math textbooks, which we helped purchase, lively reading programs and ongoing teacher training appearing to have boosted the grade 3 test scores of Canada's largest, most diverse school board. So it is possible to use the test results to put in turnaround plans to have our children learn better, and that is one board that has certainly taken that to heart. We're going to continue to move forward with the new curriculum, as I mentioned. We started in grade 9 this year, and it's going to be phased into grade 10 next year and grades 11 and 12 the years after that. We're going to have additional textbook purchases, as we have each year, to make sure we have textbooks that will support the curriculum for teachers. We're going to continue to expand the testing. We did grade 3 and grade 6, and we're going to be expanding to grade 9. We'll be doing the grade 10 literacy test next year, and we'll also be developing an appropriate teacher testing program that will be evaluating not just knowledge, because we all know that it takes more than simply knowledge to have an excellent teacher, but also skills, training and abilities.

All those steps are designed to improve quality, and we're pleased to see they are working.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question to the Solicitor General has to do with the shooting death of Dudley George at Ipperwash Provincial Park and the destruction of key files in his ministry. The minister will be aware that a senior OPP superintendent was on secondment to his office. He was at all the key meetings involving Ipperwash, the intra-ministerial meetings, and was in constant contact with the police command post. Then he was transferred on April 19, 1996. This was a well-respected officer. He left his files in your office. Within 24 hours of his leaving, those files were systematically destroyed. The previous Solicitor General said: "...we are concerned about the loss of those files in terms of our ability to retain very important and critical files. I share your concern with respect to that. The current deputy has initiated a review of this situation and a review of the retention policy."

Can you inform the House of the outcome of your investigation, why those files were destroyed, and can you assure the House that no other files were destroyed?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): As the member full well knows, this matter is before the courts. It's extremely inappropriate for any of us to comment on this. This has been consistent throughout and this is the answer today.

1540

Mr Phillips: I go back to the answer the previous Solicitor General gave in the House. He gave an undertaking to the House and to people of Ontario that he would look into the matter. He said at the time that he was very concerned about our ability to retain important and critical files. He said that he would have the deputy

minister review this situation and review their retention policy.

You can understand how concerned we are that when the Solicitor General said these were important files, they were systematically destroyed within your ministry within hours of the individual leaving. The government promised to review this.

What I am terribly worried about is that while the government stonewalls on proceeding to commit to an inquiry, files are being systematically destroyed. I want your assurance that you have reviewed this matter personally and can assure the people of Ontario that no other Ipperwash files are being destroyed and that when we finally get an inquiry, these files will not have been destroyed. Can you give us your personal assurance on that?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I've answered the question before. The question asked was about a matter before the courts, and the member knows it's clearly inappropriate to comment before this matter because it is before the courts.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. We continually hear concerns right across the province and the country about keeping our economy competitive. Despite the federal Liberals' own statistics, the Prime Minister continues to claim that Canada is not suffering from a brain drain to the United States.

My riding of London-Fanshawe has a very well educated workforce whose skills are in high demand in a competitive, global economy. These people want to stay in London, and they need to stay in Ontario so that our economy can prosper and we can therefore have the health care and education we need.

I know that other provinces are calling on the Prime Minister to initiate training programs and cut taxes. But time is passing, and we can't afford to wait any longer. Minister, if the federal Liberals will not do anything, what will you do to keep Ontario's economy prosperous?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I thank the member for London-Fanshawe for the question. There is no question that cutting taxes is essential to creating a competitive, positive economic environment. Our government has recognized that fact, and we have cut taxes 69 times, with 30 proposed tax cuts. But equally important to creating a competitive business climate is being able to supply a skilled workforce, which is why we announced the strategic skills investment in our 1999 budget, a multi-year, \$100-million program. The strategic skills investment has created a partnership opportunity with the public sector to help increase the responsiveness of Ontario's training institutions to business needs. Investors want a qualified workforce, and these programs will enable us to supply highly trained people who can do the job and help Ontario open for business.

While we are doing our part to keep our economy strong, I would like to encourage my colleagues across the way to talk to their federal cousins in Ottawa to stop talking about tax cuts and start implementing tax cuts.

Mr Mazzilli: Minister, I know you were in southwestern Ontario recently, at the St Thomas campus of Fanshawe College, to officially announce the strategic skills investment for millwrights and tool-and-die makers. The funding from this program will assist Fanshawe in acquiring new equipment to expand and renovate facilities and provide computer training aids. The total value of the project is \$1.6 million, a truly worthwhile investment in the future of Ontario.

I have recently heard that there is a call for another proposal of the strategic skills investment. Could you advise us of that proposal, Minister?

Hon Mr Palladini: We're very proud of this program. The latest call for proposals invites industry and its education and community partners to join with the government of Ontario in creating new ways and new opportunities for people to learn the skills that businesses need to keep Ontario competitive.

While project selection will continue to be on a competitive basis, the proposal must come from a partnership among industry stakeholders, public and private educators and trainers or community organizations. The eligibility criteria include increasing the supply of people with strategic skills so as to meet the demands of new technologies, ensuring benefits go beyond one firm and develop a wide range of skills, and demonstrating the capacity to make Ontario's businesses more effective and more competitive.

The program at Fanshawe College is a terrific example of what can be achieved when the private and public sectors get together. I encourage all individuals from across Ontario to apply by the deadline of Tuesday, February 1, 2000.

TRANSPORTATION OF DANGEROUS GOODS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology.

As of December 2, the US Department of Energy has permission to transport a shipment of weapons-grade plutonium in the form of MOX fuel from Los Alamos, New Mexico, to Ontario. We learned today that the material will probably travel in special trucks called SSTs, which are designed to carry nuclear bombs. The special couriers who drive these trucks call themselves "road warriors," and they travel in convoys of up to 23 special agents, all armed with M-16 rifles and 12-gauge shotguns.

The road warriors, we know, have the authority in the United States to use deadly force to deal with any potential risk with respect to this shipment. We also know that as of this morning, a spokesperson for the Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd is quoted as saying that discussions are underway that may allow these road

warriors to accompany the test shipment as it travels from the Soo to Chalk River.

I think this is outrageous and I think it's unacceptable to the majority of Ontarians. Will your Premier contact the Prime Minister today and say that no test shipment of weapons-grade plutonium will ever cross the province of Ontario?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr Speaker, I refer that question to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): This is an issue that is of extreme concern to the people of Ontario. My ministry has contacted the federal government, who are responsible for the transportation of all dangerous goods in Canada. Regulation under the federal Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act and regulations thereof are the ones which we refer to.

In the US, it is quite apparent that very extreme safety precautions are being applied to this shipment, and we expect the federal government in Canada to apply no lesser standard in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Supplementary.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Minister, if this is playing out like a bad movie, trust me, it is. Imagine a community of men and women and children, unarmed, confronting these trucks called SSTs with 23 special agents armed with M-16s and 12-gauge shotguns.

I was at a meeting about two months ago with the band council of Garden River, and a woman at that meeting said to me, "Tony, you go back and tell the mayor of Sault Ste Marie that if he lets this stuff come across the bridge into our community, he'd better have someplace to store it." These people are serious about stopping this stuff.

Will you end the possibility of this terrible confrontation today by phoning the Prime Minister and telling him: "No. This is off. It won't happen. It isn't going to happen"?

Hon Mr Turnbull: I would suggest that we're extremely concerned about it, but this is a federal matter. The federal government is the body which has agreed to accept this shipment, and indeed they are the regulators of all dangerous goods travelling on the highways.

We have communicated our concerns and we expect the federal government to adhere to this, and indeed I think it is appropriate that we have proper security as this passes through Ontario.

1550

TEXTBOOKS

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Minister of Education. Recently I attended a parent-teacher interview for my daughter who attends elementary school. During this interview, my daughter's teacher indicated that he has only one math textbook for the 25 students in his class.

You can imagine the difficulties this causes? Homework assignments must be photocopied, and students who need extra assistance and students who may be able to work ahead only have access to work that has been copied. It is very difficult for teachers to balance the individual needs of all their students when they don't have textbooks.

Minister, you have stated that the government has spent \$323 million on textbooks, and so you should have. You have introduced new curriculum in every grade from kindergarten to grade 9 in every subject area. Students are being tested on this new curriculum and the results will be published in the newspaper. Yet these students still do not have all the textbooks they need to succeed. What are you prepared to do to guarantee that students in Ontario will have the textbooks they need to meet the expectations of the new curriculum?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): One of the reasons we put more money into textbooks is because what we've seen over the previous many years was that while education property taxes had gone through the roof, some 120% in terms of increases, front-line teachers were certainly not seeing that in their classrooms. They didn't even have one textbook to photocopy in many schools. It was an absolutely abysmal picture. That's why, in changing the way we financially support education, we have specific allocations for textbooks.

Actually \$323 million was just a specific textbook grant on top of \$163 million for textbooks that's in the basic funding for the boards, plus another \$30 million that was put out there for special funding for textbooks. There's been something like \$516 million put out just for learning materials in the classroom. I'm very pleased to say that there are literally thousands, if not millions, of new textbooks out in this province that were not there when they were in government.

Do we need to do more? Do we need to have more textbooks? Absolutely. We are committed to continuing our funding to make sure that those new supports are there for teachers.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Your government has provided every student in the province, 2.2 million students in Ontario, with a copy of My Ontario Millennium Memento. This book is lovely. This question does not discredit the students who submitted work. In fact I commend every student who participated in the project. My issue is that this government can find the resources to print and distribute 2.2 million books that just happen to have the Premier's photograph on the front page, but it does not provide the students of this province with the textbooks they need to succeed in the classroom.

My local school board has spent its allocation for textbooks. So have many others in the province. Still there are classrooms without textbooks in core subject areas: in mathematics, in science, in language arts. Minister, will you tell me when students in Ontario will have the textbooks they need to meet the expectations of your new curriculum?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, actually I have noticed many of the materials that her party leader and caucus have sent out over the last couple of years have had pictures of her leader on them. I've never criticized her for that. I certainly haven't criticized him for doing that.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I've obviously hit a nerve over there.

Secondly, one of the things that teachers said we needed to do was to showcase the good things that are happening in our education system. This particular book, which has the work of students, which was juried, if you will, by parents and teachers, is a selection of excellence in our education system. I think it's worth sending that out.

I would also like to remind the honourable member that we gave \$516 million to textbooks in this province. It is the most that has ever gone in a single grant out there for textbooks in this province. Unfortunately, not all the boards spent it on textbooks. That's their choice. They're elected trustees. But some of them spent it on other things, not on textbooks.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was just hoping that the Hansard could reflect the withdrawal of the comment by the Minister of Energy in regard to the staff person at the school board in the question that was just asked by our member.

The Deputy Speaker: As you know, the rules don't allow either the Speaker or someone else to correct any records.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Solicitor General. Minister, as you are aware, today marks the 10th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, when 14 young women were gunned down. This indeed was devastating to family, friends and also to classmates. I was pleased to hear this morning on the news that a memorial has been erected in recognition of those 14 women.

Minister, Cathy and I have three daughters, Darcy, Laurel and Alana, three young women who are approximately the same age as the women who were gunned down. They were in university at that time, and I can tell you, Cathy and I are very concerned about their safety.

Minister, could you tell the House about some of the initiatives your ministry has taken to combat violence against women, particularly my daughters?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Today, as the 10th anniversary of the Montreal massacre, it's very important for all of us to express ourselves very firmly against violence against women. We are committed to making sure we are all safe in our communities, but if I might speak for a minute about domestic violence, domestic assault is a very serious crime. It seems to insinuate itself into the areas where we should feel the safest, and that's our homes. We've taken a lot of

leadership in many areas, including a partnership with Crime Stoppers and adequacy standards and integrated justice.

I might speak just quickly about a situation, the May-les inquest, that took place about year ago, another tragic situation. Out of that there were about 213 recommendations. I must say that almost all of them have been implemented now. I just point out a couple of them that were relevant, such as pilot testing of SupportLink, which is a pre-programmed 911 cellular phone program for victims of domestic violence; also, the development of a draft model on police response to domestic violence based on the best practices from jurisdictions across North America.

PETITIONS

AIR QUALITY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a rather lengthy petition. I'll read it in part.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the effluent coming from the Commercial Alcohol ethanol plant is creating a noxious smell in the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent Essex, which has a nauseating impact on citizens who breathe it in; and

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham have repeatedly brought this problem to the attention of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the former MPP for Chatham-Kent; and

"Whereas the former MPP for Chatham-Kent and the Ministry of the Environment indicated that Commercial Alcohols was given an eight-month period to correct the problem, which time elapsed on July 1999, and the problem has not been remedied;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in regulation 346 of the Environmental Protection Act be immediately enforced on Commercial Alcohols Inc to ensure that the citizens of Chatham and surrounding area have fresh air to breathe, free from the noxious odours that are spewed by the ethanol plant located on Bloomfield Road, in the westerly outskirts of the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent."

1600

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I am pleased to continue the petition presented to this House on behalf of people in my community of Scarborough Centre.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I add my signature to this petition.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): It being 4 o'clock, pursuant to standing order 30(d), it is now time for orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS

EN CE QUI CONCERNE

LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ

ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 2, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I am pleased to continue with the debate. Mr Speaker, as you leave the chair, may I clarify with the Clerk's table whether in fact I have 23 minutes left on the clock in the

leadoff hour speech? I'm getting a nod which suggests I do have 23 minutes, which comes as a pleasure to me because I had been informed I only had 12 minutes left to speak.

I do appreciate the opportunity to continue the debate which I began last Thursday afternoon on Bill 23 and to look again at the primary purpose of this bill, which is to basically extend the powers to carry out the directives of the hospital restructuring commission, powers which at one point were vested in the hospital restructuring commission through regulation but were taken back by the Minister of Health in April 1999. So although the hospital restructuring commission was given powers that essentially had the force of law to direct hospital boards to close, to amalgamate and to carry out other directives that the hospital commission saw as being appropriate, those powers of the hospital restructuring commission were subsequently taken back by the Minister of Health. So what we have now is a situation in which the Minister of Health holds the powers that were given to her under Bill 26, the infamous bully bill that I spent some time discussing last Thursday afternoon.

The bill that's before us essentially effects directives that in turn affect 119 hospitals in some 22 communities. I want to make it quite clear that that's the focus of the bill, to extend the powers to the year 2005; not to give the minister the power to go in and close and amalgamate hospitals that have not yet been affected by the directives of the hospital restructuring commission, but to complete the work of the hospital restructuring commission.

I have some very real concerns about the intent of this government, should at some point in the future it decide that it wants to extend that power to close or amalgamate hospitals beyond the year 2005 or in fact to extend it to an ability to carry out a sweeping further restructuring of Ontario's hospital system. We've seen with how little notice, how little public debate and how little public consultation this government can bring about the kind of sweeping change which the hospital restructuring commission's work has attempted to bring into effect.

I addressed last Thursday some of the confusion that now exists in the delivery of hospital services, confusion that has been created by the sweeping nature of the changes that were proposed by the hospital restructuring commission and indeed by the sheer mistakes—there is no other term for it—that were made by the hospital restructuring commission.

One of the mistakes was made quite clear by the auditor in his last report, in which he identifies—actually, I should correct that, because it's the Ministry of Health, which to this point has identified the fact that carrying out the recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission, for capital costs alone, will be some \$3.9 billion. The hospital restructuring commission said that those costs would actually be \$1.8 billion, a fairly significant mistake on the capital costs alone.

My colleague the member for Renfrew I know will want to speak about the local portion of the capital cost of carrying out the directives of the hospital restructuring

commission, because of course one of the ironic things about these directives that are being given to hospital boards is that they are to close down their operations, to amalgamate their operations, to make changes that they may not feel are in the best interests of the delivery of health care in their communities, and for the privilege of carrying out those orders from the hospital restructuring commission or, as the case is now, from the Minister of Health herself, their local community has to raise 30% of the cost. Since the hospital restructuring commission seriously underestimated the capital costs of carrying out their orders, not only does the government's share go up significantly, but the local cost expected from local communities also goes up significantly. That's a \$2.1-billion mistake on capital costs alone, and that's just the mistakes the Ministry of Health has found to this point in time.

They were details that you'd think a commission that had been given time, if they had been given time, to carry out a massive restructuring of our hospital system would not have made. They were details like the actual renovation costs when they recommended closure of one hospital and renovations in the hospital that was to accept the services. They simply failed to understand what the actual cost of renovation would be. They failed to understand that if you're going to close down programs in one space and relocate them to another space, you've got to provide space for the programs to be relocated. They missed that fairly obvious fact.

They missed things like the importance of upgrading heating and air-conditioning systems in the hospitals that are to be renovated in order to take over the services of the hospitals that are being closed. These kinds of mistakes perhaps would not have been made if a commission had actually been given the time and, maybe I would add, the mandate to look at a reasonable restructuring of Ontario's hospital system.

There are significant concerns, and I touched on these last Thursday, about the kind of hospital system that will be left if the directives of the hospital restructuring commission are carried out, whether there are going to be enough acute care beds left in the hospitals across the province to meet patients' needs. We already know that the auditor has said that the funding formula for hospitals does not respond to demand, so how could it be that the hospital commission would somehow have some magic formula—and we know it was an arbitrary application of formula that brought about its recommendations—that would determine how many beds would be necessary in order to meet needs? We know that they simply looked at the most efficient hospitals in terms of patient-days per thousand population and didn't look at community needs.

I would suggest that the concerns about whether or not our system is going to have enough beds to meet needs in the future if the hospital commission's directives are carried out are very legitimate concerns. We know that our emergency rooms are still clogged up. We know stories of 35 people lying on stretchers in emergency room hallways. Why? Because our hospitals don't have

enough beds to admit the people who are in the emergency department and need to be admitted. We know that the answer of the commission was to say, "Well, that's because there are chronic care patients in acute care beds, and that's not very efficient, so let's get the chronic care patients out." That's what I was raising last Thursday.

The confusion that I have is with a commission that says we're going to free up acute care beds by moving chronic care patients out and then goes and shuts down 3,500 chronic care beds. So there are significant questions about what our long-term-care system is going to look like if the hospital restructuring commission's directions are carried out.

The questions I'm hearing are concerns about whether or not chronic care hospitals are actually going to be able to accommodate the acute care patients coming out of our acute care hospitals; questions about whether or not there's going to be room for the chronic care patients who are going to be displaced from the chronic care hospitals that are to be closed, because remember, we not only have 3,500 chronic care beds closing, but we have these chronic care patients in acute care hospitals who are going to be displaced and put into chronic care hospitals. So the question is, is there going to be enough room in our long-term-care facilities to take the chronic care patients who are going to be dislocated from the chronic care hospitals that are to be closed and are to take patients now in acute care hospitals?

1610

There are questions about whether waiting lists for long-term-care facility beds are going to be even longer, and there are very serious questions about whether our community care access centres, our community care services, are going to be able to meet the demands placed on them as more and more patients are discharged earlier and earlier from our acute care hospitals and as more and more of our long-term-care patients, individual seniors needing long-term care, are expected to be cared for in a home care setting.

There is also very real concern about whether chronic care patients who are now to be redefined as long-term-care patients are going to be funded at a level adequate to respond to their needs. I think of just one example, Riverdale Hospital here in Toronto, one of the chronic care hospitals ordered to be closed. They did what the hospital restructuring commission refused to do: They had an assessment done of the needs of the individuals who are now being cared for in Riverdale Hospital. They had the assessment done by the community care access centre that would indeed be responsible for providing for these patients in either a long-term-care facility or in the community, and that community care access assessment said that 92% of the people now resident in the chronic care facility of Riverdale Hospital needed chronic care support, not long-term-care support.

There are some huge questions that I trust the Minister of Health is dealing with about whether or not there are going to be enough funding resources to adequately care

for the chronic care patients now being redefined because of the approach and the recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission as long-term-care patients.

I want to make it very clear, as I conclude my contribution to this debate, that there's no question in my mind that the mess of hospital restructuring is going to have to be sorted out and that the Ministry of Health has had a great deal of work to do and will have a great deal of work to do in the future to deal with the mistakes that were made by the hospital restructuring commission. It's a fact that very little of the work that was recommended to be done by the hospital restructuring commission has actually been completed. My understanding is that only some four of the 29 hospitals that are actually to be closed have indeed been closed. If I just look at the auditor's report, he tells us that only 30 of 81 projects had actually received approval to go ahead as of April 1999.

I want to be absolutely clear that I respect the fact that the reason those recommendations have not gone forward more quickly is because they are not necessarily the right recommendations, and they certainly have not been costed adequately. So I think it is important that the Ministry of Health take time to revisit the recommendations and the directives of the hospital restructuring commission.

That brings me specifically to whether Bill 23 provides the Ministry of Health and is necessary to provide the Ministry of Health with that kind of time. I thought it was amazingly—I guess "disingenuous" would be the word to describe the Ministry of Health's press release in announcing Bill 23 and the support that has been offered by various hospital administrators. The thing that I find quite amazing—not surprising, but disingenuous—is the fact that the hospital administrators who are quoted as supportive of this bill are administering hospitals that are the beneficiaries of the work of the hospital restructuring commission.

I don't see any listing here of the hospitals that are to be closed as a result of this. I certainly don't think anybody went out to communities like Port Hope, for example, and asked either the citizens or the hospital board in Port Hope whether they believe that the Minister of Health should have her powers to go in and close their hospital extended until the year 2005 so that she could carry out the very arbitrary directives of the hospital restructuring commission. I don't see any recommendations here from the Sudbury Memorial Hospital supporting the legislation or from Pembroke Civic or Wellesley or Women's College. I don't see Humber River Regional; Riverdale; Runnymede; Riverside; Salvation Army Grace in Essex; St Joseph's Chatham and Kent, because we certainly know that St Joseph's Chatham and Kent has some very real concerns about the recommendations; Whitby General; Peterborough's St Joseph's, none of these were asked whether or not they believe the Minister of Health's power to close their hospitals should be extended until the year 2005.

Let me acknowledge that there is support from the Ontario Hospital Association for Bill 23. The support that

the OHA offered was conditional. It was conditional first of all on an assurance that this legislation would only affect the 22 communities that had received orders from the hospital restructuring commission. Again, I think this is somewhat disingenuous on the part of the Ontario Hospital Association, because they also said they wanted an assurance that there would be a full public review before the year 2005 of the impact of these recommendations and before any further extension of power would be granted. I hope the OHA was fully aware of the fact that literally with a stroke of a legislative pen, this minister and this government can not only extend their powers to unilaterally close or amalgamate hospitals, or to micro-manage hospitals, but they can extend it to as many communities as have not yet felt the effect of the closure recommendations.

The Ontario Hospital Association is supportive of the legislation, they say, because it gives the minister the flexibility to change the recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission. I don't believe this legislation provides any flexibility which the Minister of Health and this government, through cabinet direction, do not already hold. This government, under Bill 26, gave itself incredible powers to control and direct the operation of our hospitals. It's true that if this bill did not go through the power given under section 6 of Bill 26 to close and amalgamate hospitals would end in March 2000. So I guess the question is, what happens to the directives of the hospital restructuring commission at that point? Do they become absolutely binding? That's the contention, apparently, of the Ministry of Health's lawyers. I don't have law training, but I would be very surprised to find that there were any real, solid legal grounds on which directives made by a commission which was sunsetted and whose directives have not been implemented could be considered to be binding on a government. If some twist of the way in which the legislation was written—and I've been back over the legislation very recently in some detail and I can't find the twist—does make the directives binding even after the commission itself has been sunsetted and even after the minister has taken back unto herself the powers that were given for a temporary period to the commission, it would be very easy for the government to come in as they do on a regular basis and change the laws to ensure that the directives were not binding. That's not what this bill does. This bill extends the sweeping, dictatorial powers that this government gave to itself to bring about changes in our hospitals.

What if this legislation didn't pass? What if the minister didn't have the extension of powers? Would everything be chaos? Instead of being binding, would the hospital commission's directives suddenly collapse? Would there be nothing left? I suspect that's a much greater fear for the government, and maybe for the hospital association, than the idea of the directives becoming binding.

I would submit again that under Bill 26 this government took no chances on having powers that were unassailable to bring about any changes it chose to make,

because the minister can, with the powers given to her under Bill 26, go in and appoint a supervisor to take over the running of a hospital board, and do that for any reason that she considers to be in the public interest. Further on in Bill 16, the minister and the government have given themselves total protection from any legal proceedings resulting from any decisions that would be made to close hospitals, any decisions that would be made about the funding of hospitals or indeed our health care system. So it would be entirely possible for the Minister of Health to come in and make any decisions affecting hospitals that she chose to make, even without extending these additional powers that are given to her under section 6.

The one thing that might happen is that if the government was not extending these powers under section 6, they would have to accept some direct accountability for their decisions. It's possible that they might actually have to sit down with community hospital boards and discuss whether the recommendations that were made were good for that community, and if not, what changes would have to be made in order to make recommendations that were actually workable for the delivery of hospital services to people in that particular community area. If the community hospital board said, "No, we don't think this is workable and we don't think this hospital should be closed," or, "We don't think the amalgamation will work," or, "We don't think there are going to be enough beds," and, "No, Minister of Health, we're not prepared to act as a hospital board on the recommendations which the hospital restructuring commission has made and which you now want to enforce"—it's possible a community hospital board might well say that. I can imagine that if the minister went to the Port Hope hospital board and asked them whether or not they thought these recommendations should go ahead, they would say, "No, we don't think this is right for our community."

1620

What would the minister then do? If she was determined to ignore the concerns of the community, rather than find a workable solution that the community accepted, I think the minister would have to go in and appoint a supervisor and take over the running of the hospital and acknowledge that it is no longer a community hospital board that is managing that hospital on behalf of the citizens in that community, that it is the Ministry of Health and the Harris government which is now running the hospitals of the province.

That is reality. If the minister didn't have these powers to order hospital boards to do the dirty work for them, the minister and the government would have to clearly be seen to have taken over the running of the hospitals and the hospital boards by appointing a supervisor to do just that.

I can see why the Minister of Health wants to extend her power to issue orders and directives, and trust that hospital boards will simply follow the orders and directives because they're told that this is law and they have no choice under the law but to follow these orders. I

think there will be hospital boards that refuse to accept the orders and I think the minister will be called upon to appoint supervisors where that occurs.

I want to express my very real concern about the continued direction of this government to centralize all power, all control, all decision-making for our hospitals in the hands of the cabinet and the Minister of Health. I don't believe that any concerns about whether or not you're going to add to the confusion and whether or not you're going to have take the next step of bringing in a supervisor rather than just issuing directives can be excuses for continuing to take unto themselves powers, now for five more years, that essentially make the role of the community hospital board meaningless.

I am concerned that the logical extension of this kind of direction would see the end of community hospital boards, just as the kind of direction this government has taken in education to run education from the minister's office is going to make the role of local trustees for education redundant. Just as we're likely to see the end of local school boards, because their role has become implementing the dirty work of government, so too we will see the demise, little by little, of community hospital boards. If their only work is to carry out the dirty work, the directions of the government, then what reason is there for a community hospital board to continue to exist?

Because I believe this is the direction of this government on many fronts, but particularly in education and in health care, I was concerned to see a recommendation of the auditor that says there needs to be clear accountability for hospital management that doesn't exist now. The auditor says that it's got to be—I should take that back. The auditor says there needs to be a clear accountability framework; he didn't address what that framework should look like. He made it quite clear that the issue is: Are hospital boards accountable to the minister for the spending of public monies or are they accountable to the community? The auditor says that the hospital boards see themselves as accountable to their community.

Surely there is no question that the Minister of Health and the government have the accountability and the responsibility for the management of the public dollar. Even prior to Bill 26 the Minister of Health had the responsibility to step into a hospital situation and appoint a supervisor and take control of the hospital if he or she was concerned about fiscal mismanagement of the public dollars. There is no question that that fiscal responsibility has always existed and should always exist into the future, but this is different.

Under Bill 26 the quality of care was no longer to be the sole concern of the Minister of Health in looking at the funding of hospitals and the management of the dollars. It was also to be the fiscal imperatives of government that were to take at least as great a priority in the minister's decision to step in and take over a hospital as the quality of care of patients.

The hospital boards, as the auditor said, have always believed that their accountability was not primarily to the

Minister of Health, but was primarily back to their community. The ministry's response to the auditor was to say that they are going to bring in an accountability framework.

Given the broad directions of this government, which we have seen time and time again, I don't think there's much question that the new accountability framework is going to make it very clear that the accountability of hospital administrators and of hospital boards is to the minister and not back to the community.

It is my personal belief that if that direction continues, we are opening the door even wider to private hospitals carrying out public health care in Ontario, much along the lines that Mr Klein has now opened in Alberta. If there's one significant difference between private hospitals being contracted to do publicly-paid-for health care and public hospitals doing that same public health care, it is that the board of a private hospital is accountable to its shareholders, and the board of a public hospital is accountable to its community.

I don't think any of us is going to question that the ultimate responsibility for the spending of dollars lies with the Minister of Health and with the government that is allocating those dollars. I don't ever want to see us lose the public hospital board's clear responsibility to its community for the delivery of hospital services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Comments or questions?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I wasn't here to hear the comments from the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan on Thursday and apologize for that, but let me follow up from some of the comments she made here today to say that our concerns are the same.

When we debated Bill 26—and members in this House will remember that fiasco that finally led to some at least minimal public hearings on the whole matter—clearly the public was very much concerned about the overwhelming, arbitrary, unilateral powers that were granted in community after community to have their community hospitals closed, for example, to have records seized, to have boards of directors taken over by staff from the Ministry of Health etc. I don't think that concern has diminished in any way, shape or form.

There are many people in many of the communities that have been affected by hospital restructuring, my own included, who continue to believe that the arbitrary way in which this was done does not guarantee good health care in the long term, has nothing to do with ensuring good access to health care for people in our communities, has nothing to do with saving of costs, and basically has nothing to do whatsoever with good provision of health care into the next millennium.

People's concerns remain the same with the level of increased arbitrary, unilateral power that first the restructuring commission had and now clearly the minister will have. People in our communities want to have a say about their health care. People in our communities understand what is needed. Bureaucrats in Toronto and people

from the Health Services Restructuring Commission, who didn't live in our community, with the exception of one who made decisions in our community, don't understand what those needs are.

Here we go again with another bill that will merely transfer some of those extraordinary powers out of the hands of the commission, which has acted in an advisory capacity in the last number of months, into the Ministry of Health. I don't think we're going to see any better decision-making under that process; certainly no room for public input.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Just for the information of members, the powers contained in this legislation don't do anything really other than to ensure that the decisions that have been made to date by the Health Services Restructuring Commission actually come to fruition. The commission, as you know, has been wound down to an advisory role, and the minister needs these powers to ensure that its decisions to date are fully implemented.

While I have the opportunity, as the former Minister of Health, there's one misconception about health care restructuring that I want to put to rest as best I can. Our opponents accuse us of trying to save money by restructuring the health care system. That's not what it was about at all. There is no record anywhere in this province of me, the Premier or my colleagues talking about health care restructuring as a means of saving money. It's all about ensuring we prepare properly and in a systematic way for the growing and aging population.

Health care restructuring will cost this government and the taxpayers of Ontario hundreds of millions of dollars, and in fact billions of dollars, in new capital. It's the largest undertaking of new construction in the health care system in the history of Ontario. It's about improving services, not cutting services, finding efficiencies and amalgamating institutions where that's possible. And yes, indeed, it will cost more money because there are more people and we're all getting older and we need more services. That's what it's about, and this allows the minister to continue that good work to make sure we truly have a health care system for the future.

1630

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The remarks of the previous member are really quite revealing. Time and again I heard government members in my part of the province talk about all the savings that would accrue from this. My good friend the former member for Lincoln, Frank Sheehan, a person who always had a sharp pencil when it came to cutting government expenditures, certainly portrayed this, as I recall, as saving money for the taxpayer. This is a complete surprise, although those of us who have watched it unfold recognize that unfortunately our predictions have come true. The cost of restructuring is way out of control.

You were so eager to close hospitals despite the fact that when Mike Harris was asked in the 1995 election campaign, "Is it your plan to close hospitals?" he said, "No, Robert, I can guarantee you it is not my plan to close hospitals." Since then, some 40 hospitals have been closed or forced to amalgamate in this province. That's a promise made, a promise clearly broken, just as the promise with restructuring in Hamilton is a promise broken. As the member for what used to be called Wentworth North walks in—I heard his statement during the campaign; it was a good statement. It said that he would resign if this government did not live up to its commitment, and I certainly admire him for taking that stance.

On this bill we see that infamous Bill 26, the huge bill we call the "bully bill" on this side of the House. That's what many people call it. This is being extended for yet another five years. The draconian, undemocratic hospital restructuring commission or, as I call it, the hospital destruction commission, will have its work continue, although it may not be in effect for the rest of the next five years.

This is most unfortunate. This is doing irreparable damage to the health care system, but then people will be prepared to accept radical solutions they ordinarily would not.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I listened intently to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. Her speech was another doom-and-gloom speech on health in this province.

I think she would have wanted to mention that when she was the leader of the Liberal Party, she promised to spend only \$17 billion on health care. That was their commitment in 1995. Our commitment was to spend at least \$17.4 billion.

Each and every year that we were in office since 1995, we've actually increased the amount of money into the health care system in Ontario. Today we're spending \$20.6 billion and we've made another commitment to increase health care spending by 20% over the next four years. That was our Blueprint commitment. We did all this because we had a very strong economy in Ontario. We were able to cut taxes and create jobs.

What we saw the federal government doing—they were the ones cutting health care spending in Ontario. Our Premier, Mike Harris, had to fight very hard, along with our caucus, to ensure that Jean Chrétien and the federal Liberal Party returns money to Ontario.

I wish that they had fought the federal Liberal Party with the vigour they fought us with, because it was their federal cousins who were cutting health care in our province.

The member also wondered what the present CEO of the Sudbury Regional Hospital had to say about Bill 23, and I could tell her what Joe De Mora had to say: "I appreciate that your government had the courage to undertake long-overdue restructuring and asked that you retain these powers to complete this important initiative." That's what he said in his comments, and I wanted to put that on the record.

All I want to say today about Liberal policy—whether it's health care, whether it's tax cuts, whether it's tax hikes—is that Liberal policy is all about knowing which way the wind is blowing on a particular day.

The Acting Chair: Response?

Mrs McLeod: Since the term “promises” has been used in the questions and comments, I appreciate my colleague from St Catharines reminding us of the promise Mike Harris made before an election, that it was not his intention to close hospitals, because that's what we're talking about today. Setting up the hospital restructuring commission, which proceeded to close some 45 hospitals or to order them closed, is a complete and total shattering of that promise. The focus of the bill today is to give the minister the power to continue those closures, as the member for Simcoe-Grey made absolutely clear.

I was surprised at the contributions of the member from Simcoe-Grey to this afternoon's discussion. First of all, what he described as the purpose of Bill 23 is very different from what the Ministry of Health has put out in its press release. The Ministry of Health has said this is about giving the minister the flexibility to change the orders of the hospital restructuring commission. The member for Simcoe-Grey I guess wasn't given a heads-up that that was the spin, because he came in and quite rightly, in my view, said that the purpose of this bill is for one thing only, and that is to implement the directions of the hospital restructuring commission. So I thank him for that clarification.

I do, however, think it's again amazing that he would make this contribution, because it was the member for Simcoe-Grey when he was Minister of Health who actually gave away the ability of the ministry to have some flexibility and some responsibility for making decisions about hospital closures to the hospital restructuring commission. It was the current Minister of Health who decided she had to bring those powers back unto herself in order to get through an election campaign in which, clearly, the hospital restructuring commission's orders were going to be vilified by people in communities affected by them.

What I find most amazing of all is that, coming from this government, the member talks about the fact that there is the biggest capital investment ever. Well, you do have to invest capital in order to get the so-called long-term savings as you shut down 45 hospitals, but this is the biggest levy on local communities that we have ever seen in the history of this province, with no referendum at all.

Ms Martel: Before I begin, I would like to ask the unanimous consent of the House to stand down the leadoff speech. Our critic for the Ministry of Health is not here today, so I would just prefer to do 20 minutes.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead speech. Agreed? Agreed.

Ms Martel: Thank you to all members of the House. Our critic is not here at Queen's Park today, so I would like to make some comments. I appreciate that the House

will allow me to do this, and then she will be able to at another point do her leadoff on behalf of our party.

There are a couple of points that I would like to make, however, in the 20 minutes that I have. I want to look at the fact that we are dealing again with a bill at the 11th hour that the government, as I understand it, insists on having passed before the House ends in the next two weeks and my concerns with that process generally; secondly, some specific concerns that I have with both part I and part II, with respect to what the net effects are if you don't have some public hearings and what we might be missing if we don't allow other health care professionals to come and have their say on this bill; and thirdly, my overwhelming concern with the changes to the Public Hospitals Act, which, if you just listen to the Minister of Energy, who made it clear that this only had to do with transferring the directions that have already been undertaken by the Health Services Restructuring Commission to the minister so that they will be carried out, with the concern that has already been raised, and I think the ministry press release itself makes it clear, that there's much more to it than that. In fact, some of those very powers that we opposed in opposition under Bill 26 are also transferred to the Minister of Health, not just the directions themselves but also all of those enormous and arbitrary powers that came with Bill 26, which of course led to the implementation of the restructuring commission in the first place.

Let me begin with my concerns around the process. I said when I began that here we are at the 11th hour yet again, with the government insisting that a piece of legislation that they want done must be done before we recess, which would normally be in the next two weeks. I assume that is why we probably have dealt with a House calendar that extends the sittings until midnight so that we can deal with this and any number of other bills that the government has just decided are such a priority that they have to be done before we leave. Not only do they have to be done before we leave, but they will have to be done without any benefit of public hearings, of input from the broader community, of input from health care professionals, because of course if we want to get that done, there won't be enough time for that to happen unless it happens in the dead of night in a very limited way over the next two weeks; I doubt that it will, because the government certainly has made it clear they're not interested in having some public hearings on this issue.

I'd let the people know who are watching today that in fact the bill was only introduced last Tuesday, when the minister stood in her place and it came into this House. On Wednesday, we had the benefit of finally having the bill printed so we could see what it entailed. On Thursday, the government House leader's agent actually moved this bill for debate—Thursday afternoon. Members would know that that gave no one—including themselves, I'm sure, but certainly no one in the opposition party—any time to take a look at the bill. The two opposition caucuses certainly didn't have any chance to take a look at it and come to a decision about what points

to make here today. We will do that because we've been forced to have no choice in that matter.

Again, I ask the government: What's the rush? Why do you insist on a process that's so undemocratic, that's so contrary to the traditions of this place, a process that doesn't allow for proper, adequate and appropriate input in the province, that again demonstrates the contempt and disdain the government holds for this place, and holds specifically for opposition members who wish to make an alternative, a different point of view?

1640

This is clearly in line with the number of closure motions that we've been debating in the short time this House has been sitting this fall. It's clearly in line, clearly demonstrates the same mentality, the same philosophy: "It's our way or it's the highway. We don't care what the opposition has to say. We don't care what the public has to say because we're not going to allow any room for input from the public either on these bills. We want to get it in; we want to get it through; we want to have it done."

It just demonstrates again, as I said, the contempt and the disdain the government seems to have for this place, for the traditions of this place, for other people in this place who represent a different point of view and for the thousands and thousands of Ontarians, whom we in the opposition represent, who have a different point of view from the government as well.

Here we are with a bill that does two very different things. There's nothing similar about the two sets of changes the government wants to make, being brought together in a sort of mini-omnibus bill that the government only introduced last week. Debate began a day after the bill was printed and the government has indicated clearly it must be done before we leave here.

That is bound to cause any number of mistakes to be made, because that has certainly been the tradition too when this government rushes its legislation. We only have to look at the property tax changes this government has made: at least eight, if not nine, different pieces of legislation, all to fix the mistakes in the bill before, and we're still not over with those changes. No doubt this will go through because the government will use its majority, and we will be back here in the spring fixing the mistakes that flow from this hurried process.

Secondly, there are my concerns with respect to part I and part II, which are the only two parts that are related; they have nothing in common with respect to part III. It is clear that the Ontario Medical Association, for example, has expressed its concerns with respect to part I and part II. In discussions our research staff had with officials at the Ontario Medical Association, they made it clear they are worried about the powers the minister may or may not exercise. They would want to have some kind of opportunity to have some public hearings so that they could have their say.

Considering that we need the co-operation of the Ontario Medical Association to make the health care system run in this province, from many perspectives, you would think the government would at least have a

process whereby they would want to listen to those concerns and make some amendments if amendments are brought forward. But we have to say to the folks at the OMA, "Clearly the government doesn't want your input, doesn't want you to have a say and it appears the bill will go forward as is."

Very clearly, in terms of giving the government the authority, giving the minister or the director of the plan the authority, to recover costs that have been incurred in a negligent way, in the bill there are some providers who are going to be exempt from any of those problems that are incurred. The plan will not recover costs, for example, from physicians "if the negligence or wrongful act or omission of the physician occurred while the physician was acting within the scope of his or her practice," or the government will not recover costs under this section "against a hospital under the Public Hospitals Act or a laboratory under the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act if the negligence or wrongful act or omission" occurred during the course of them doing their duties, providing services that they were obliged to cover.

I appreciate that those sections are in there. That probably gives some concern to physicians and to those in hospitals who operate laboratories. They will not themselves be expected to recover costs that the ministry is going after. What's interesting, however, is there are a number of other health care professionals who operate in our health care system, who work in our hospitals, who provide services to the public, under direction, who have to provide service because their scope of practice requires them to do so. Yet the only two groups we see who will not have costs recovered against them are physicians and are people who, in a hospital, work under the auspices of the Public Hospitals Act and the lab specimens act.

What about nurses who work in the hospital system, who are obliged by their scope of practice to carry on a number of functions? What about, for example, physiotherapists who also work in our hospital system, who work in our long-term-care facilities, who are obliged because of their scope of practice, which is regulated, which is licensed in this province, to carry on certain functions? What happens about costs that may or may not be applied to them, and will they be forced to have those costs recovered against them? Clearly there's not a whole lot of information in the bill to indicate what the government's intent is here with respect to costs they want to recover.

At first glance, I would say that perhaps the government would like to go after large tobacco companies and recover some of the long-term, ongoing health care costs that we as a society are going to incur over the next many number of years because of smoking and the cancer it causes. Is that the intent of the government when they talk about pursuing people—individuals, someone—with an inability to recover costs for negligent matters, or are they talking about going after certain individuals who were negligent in their duties in a hospital or in a long-

term-care facility? From the bill, the intent of the government is not clear.

However, I must say to the government that there are a number of other people who assume their responsibilities seriously, who adhere to their scope of practice, who adhere to their colleges that make sure they continue with that scope of practice, who do work in our hospital system and long-term-care system and who have concerns about what this means to them. Does it mean anything to them? Can the government come after them? Yes or no?

Again, we only have two groups of care providers who seemingly appear to be exempt under the bill and no others. I think those very people who also work in our health care system, in the hospital system and long-term-care facilities, deserve to know the government's intent and why they apparently are not exempt from some of the actions the government would take against other groups to recover costs. That won't happen unless we have some public hearings on this bill.

If I look to the changes that seem more significant, in terms of potential impact on the province, those changes have to come under part III, which incorporates the changes to the Public Hospitals Act. Earlier today, in a response to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, the Minister of Energy said clearly that this bill has only to do with transferring powers of the Health Services Restructuring Commission to the Minister of Health. That's all this was about: to make sure that the directions that had already been submitted, that the orders that were already in place, were going to be upheld and were going to be carried out, and because the commission now operates only in an advisory capacity, someone has to ensure that happens and that someone will be the Minister of Health.

But if you look at the press release from the ministry, you get a much different story. And if you look at some of the media reports from those who also have looked at the legislation, you get a different story too. Not all of those people can be wrong. The people who have looked at this from the media perspective are saying that this change under the Public Hospitals Act will give the minister not only the right to carry out the directions that were already issued but the right to close hospitals, the right to restructure hospitals, the right to seize the records of financial transactions of hospitals and on and on. Those very same powers we saw entrenched in Bill 26, when the commission was established, seem also to flow here. The Minister of Health will have exactly the same powers that all of us opposed under Bill 26 when they were granted to the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

We don't think that it's appropriate, that it's right, that it's democratic that the Minister of Health have the unilateral ability to arbitrarily close hospitals, to arbitrarily restructure hospitals, to arbitrarily seize financial records, to arbitrarily set up staff in place of boards of directors in hospitals, because that totally undermines any community involvement and any community accountability.

I have never been convinced that people who make decisions at Queen's Park for people who live thousands of miles away from here have their best interests at heart or know what needs to be done. Yet clearly, if you look at the review of this legislation, not from opposition members but from people outside of here who have taken a look at it, that's what we appear to be transferring to the Minister of Health: those same arbitrary, unacceptable, unilateral powers that were first conferred upon the Health Services Restructuring Commission and now will be extended to her.

I don't accept that. I am opposed to that. That allows for nothing in terms of community input with respect to what's happening in the hospital system or the greater health care system. Conferring those powers in an arbitrary manner means clearly that the public will continue to not have any say, not have any input, not have any impact on the very decisions that the commission made.

1650

In my community, for example, I continue to have serious concerns about the recommendations that were made. The restructuring is well underway. I would not expect for a moment that it was ever going to be turned back. But I continue to have very serious concerns as to whether the commission, for example, did allow for the appropriate number of acute health care beds for Sudbury to act as a regional centre for health care, because we do act as a regional centre, dealing not only with people who live in the Sudbury region but in northeastern Ontario as a whole. I continue to worry that the reduced number of operating rooms that the commission ordered will not be sufficient to deal with the patients we have to deal with not only from the Sudbury region but from right across northeastern Ontario. I worry about the number of people who may indeed end up being laid off from the health care system, and what impact that will then have in terms of patient care in the hospitals.

So I continue to have very serious concerns. I think any number of other communities that haven't had the benefit—I use that term loosely—of the Health Services Restructuring Commission coming to their community should worry very much about what it means to have the Minister of Health have unilateral, arbitrary decision-making power when it comes to what happens to the hospital services and the health care services in their community, and what happens when the community has no way to have input in that process.

I'm very worried as well about whether it means the minister also has the ability to change the directions that have already been put. Certainly the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, in her description of this part of the bill, said there wasn't anything she could see clearly in it that would allow that to happen. But you know, it already is happening without this bill having been passed.

I want to give you an example that comes from both North Bay and Sudbury, because it involves psychiatric care. Very clearly, as I look at the information that was given to me, the minister is quite intent on changing the directions that were already set with respect to psych-

iatric care in North Bay and Sudbury, and is already well down the road of having that happen despite the direction that was already given. Earlier in May, Mr Peter Birnie of North Bay became the chair of the Northeastern Ontario Mental Health Implementation Task Force. He received a letter from the Ministry of Health which read as follows: that the task force will also "make recommendations pertaining to the Northeastern Mental Health Centre" in terms of the siting of the system, the siting of the beds and the related impact on physician services.

The key point there is to "make recommendations," because recommendations were already made under a direction of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. That was done in March 1999, in its report on North Bay health services restructuring. In fact, the commission made it very clear that the task force was mandated to: "(1) oversee and coordinate the reinvestment strategy to develop the community-based sector resulting from reinvestment; (2) ensure patient assessments are carried out; (3) ensure that an adequate range and mix of in-patient, out-patient and community mental health services are in place; and (4) recommend where transitional funding and the reallocation of reinvestment funding would be."

The task force was not mandated to size and site the mental health beds, because the Health Services Restructuring Commission already gave very clear directions on this to the government in the October 1998 report. Specifically, the commission said, "The commission will advise the Minister of Health to site 61 long-term-care mental health and 26 forensic beds at the site of the new North Bay General Hospital, with 31 long-term mental beds and 12 child and adolescent beds to be sited at the Sudbury-Algoma hospital site." Those recommendations are already clear; the siting of those beds and the number of beds were already in the commission's recommendations. The task force has no authority to make any changes, yet clearly in her letter to the new chair, the minister is giving him *carte blanche* to look at those very issues.

Let me give you another example: the number of beds. The restructuring committee was very clear about the division of beds between Sudbury and North Bay. There wasn't unanimous agreement about that, and I understand that, but the fact of the matter is that directions were given before the Health Services Restructuring Commission went into its advisory-only mode. They were certainly given before this legislation has been passed.

As early as May of this year the minister was signalling very clearly to that community, the chair in North Bay, that now this committee had a right, had a mandate, to do things that had already supposedly been set in stone; that is, to determine a different number of beds and a different siting of those beds.

You cannot have a process where you allow change in one community that just happens to be in the Premier's riding, but you make sure that all of those other recommendations in the 21 other communities continue in force regardless of the opposition in those commu-

ities, because in many of those communities there has been opposition. You cannot have a process where you allow that to happen in a single riding, the Premier's riding, in a single instance, referring to psychiatric services in his riding, because what does that say about what went on, what does that say about partisan political influence, what does that say about the minister's ability, and why we should be worried about what else the minister now intends to do once she has full responsibility to carry out the directions of the Health Services Restructuring Committee, as she will under this legislation?

My colleagues who speak later will talk about what's happened under restructuring. The auditor has done a report and made it clear that the costs for restructuring are far beyond what the restructuring commission ever envisioned, and we will have to deal with that. But I am very worried about the new powers that will flow to the minister here. I think they're wrong.

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Nickel Belt's comments here today. I think it's important to note that this bill deals with 22 communities in Ontario, those communities being Brant county, Brockville, Essex, the five counties from the Cornwall area, the GTA-905 area, the Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge area, Hamilton, Hastings-Prince Edward, Kent, Kingston, Lambton, London, Niagara, North Bay, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Waterloo and West Parry Sound.

Those are the areas Bill 23 deals with. It doesn't extend beyond any of those other communities. There are some 1,200 legally binding directions by the HSRC that are out there in over 100 hospitals in those 22 communities. I've seen media reports where opposition parties are somehow trying to portray that this extends beyond those 22 communities. I just wanted to set the record straight on that.

We're here for one reason, and that's for the patients of Ontario. That's what we're here for today: to improve the health care system in our province.

What have we seen through restructuring? We've seen restructuring, and reinvestments put back into communities. We've seen the tripling of the number of MRIs in Ontario. Do you know we have more MRIs in Ontario today than the rest of Canada combined? That's something other parties don't seem to want to recognize. We've seen 56 brand new, up-to-date emergency rooms built. We've seen five new cancer care centres built across our province, in Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener, St Catharines—I say to the member for St Catharines, a new cancer centre there—and Sault Ste Marie. We've seen also three new cardiac centres. Once these improvements are put in place, we're going to see them that helping the people of Ontario with a far better health care system.

Mr Bradley: It's interesting the member mentions Niagara because we have the problem with ophthalmologists in the Niagara region, where the ophthalmologists now are going to withdraw their services and

we're going to be in an absolute crisis. They'll be sending their patients to Hamilton, as the minister instructs, unless the minister reconsiders.

In terms of restructuring, I can tell you that the system is worse right now than it ever was. You people have allowed a situation where hospitals are now running deficits and you're telling the hospitals to get the money out of services they provide already. Anybody who's been in a hospital a dozen years ago and today notices a huge difference. Not that the staff aren't trying to do the job, they're obviously trying to do the job, but there simply are not enough staff to do so.

My view is that as with the Fraser Institute, which the Premier spoke to the other day, what you people in the right wing want to do is discredit public institutions. You bring them to a crisis point so that the people of this province will accept some radical, bizarre, unacceptable in other circumstances, solution to the problem.

You're leading us down the path to a two-tier system where the richest people in the province will get the best health care and poorer people will have to whistle for it or accept the very basic care. That's where you're heading because you'll discredit those systems. Why? Because you're wedded to yet another tax decrease and you're taking away the funding that would be there. Most people I talk to, outside of a few rabid right-wingers, tell me: "Please, don't give the tax cut. Put the money back into the health care system instead." Try to pick up the pieces after you've destroyed the health care system in times gone by. Our hospitals notice it. Various aspects of the health care system are now away worse off than they were before, and you people are going to put the final nail in the coffin if you get this bill through.

1700

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to commend my colleague from Nickel Belt for making an excellent speech and putting on the record some very important issues and concerns about this bill.

This is another attempt by this government to take power away from the people and put it directly in the hands of the minister, which is rather interesting. Usually, in situations where the government finds itself moving into some difficulty or expecting there will be some difficulty rolling something out, they toss the responsibility to somebody else and then blame them for all the wrongs and ills that occur. The member is correct when she says there are a lot of problems in the restructuring that we're beginning to see across this province which need to be fixed but not necessarily in the way the government is proposing to fix them, bringing into consideration political partisanship and who lives where and all those kinds of things, which this government pretends to be moving away from, working their way back in.

Over the last four years we have seen control of our health care system taken slowly but surely out of the hands of duly appointed boards of directors and district health councils, and given to vehicles of this government to answer directly to the minister and the whiz kids in the

Premier's office in an attempt to spend less money on health care and, in the end, all our communities are worse off.

I hope this doesn't take us there even more quickly, or further.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to rise today and talk about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999.

As most of the public will now and as the members opposite know, we had an onerous task of hospital restructuring. Even though previous governments knew what had to be done, they kept closing rooms at a time but never had the guts to start implementing some of the changes that were long overdue in Ontario. Our government really took the lead on that and made sure that even though it was a difficult decision, even though we thought there might be some political backlash, which some members opposite were afraid to take, we went ahead and implemented what is good for Ontarians.

I made a statement in the House earlier this afternoon about research and development spending. Research and development spending in pharmaceuticals has increased over the last five years. Merck Frosst is spending \$330 million, which is a sort of all-time high. As well, other pharmaceutical companies are spending. I've had discussions with the OMA. They're very happy with some of the steps we have taken. I've had discussions Dr Dickson of the William Osler Health Centre. He's very happy with the restructuring that is being done.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission finished their studies and finished their task in March. This bill allows the hospitals to implement some of the changes that have been brought about. It just gives them a little more time. Some hospitals have already realized the benefits of this restructuring. This bill allows more time to the 22 communities that have not yet implemented it.

I think it's only fair to say that restructuring is working and that it's fair for the people of Ontario.

Ms Martel: The member from Scarborough Southwest and the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale have gone to great efforts to say that this bill only applies to 23 communities. The member from Scarborough Southwest in fact named those communities, as I noted he did in his remarks when he spoke to the bill on Thursday.

I have a copy of the bill here. Those 23 communities aren't listed anywhere in this bill. There's nothing in this bill that says the effect of part III is to allow the minister to apply the Health Services Restructuring Commission authorities and directions only to those 23 communities. Maybe it will come in the regulations, who knows. But to try and say, "Those are the only communities it affects; it won't have any other impact; we're not going to extend those unilateral, arbitrary powers to any other community in terms of restructuring hospital closures, taking over a board etc," is really false. There is nothing in the legislation before us, Bill 23, part III, changes to the

Public Hospitals Act, which names or notes those 23 communities in any way, shape or form. Since there is no restriction on them at all mentioned in the legislation, I wouldn't assume for one moment that the government's extension of its powers is going to have to do anything with only those 23 communities that have already been affected. I think it's clear, from other people's reviews of the legislation, not opposition members', that they see the very same thing.

With respect to the effects of restructuring, I think it's worth noting what the auditor said, which is based on hospital estimates: "The capital cost for hospital restructuring would increase to approximately \$3.9 billion from the \$2.1 billion originally estimated by the HSRC." That means that not only were their recommendations completely off in terms of financial estimates, but many communities like my own are now going to have the privilege of having to pick up even more costs from restructuring than we never envisioned. Our deficit right now is \$8 billion alone, and we have no guarantee from the ministry that they're going to cover that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's a pleasure for me to rise and speak on Bill 23, which is before us in this debate. It was good information from my good friend the member from Scarborough Southwest, who talked about the 23 regions and what it says in the legislation, that it only applies to the directives issued by HSRC prior to April 1999. So whatever you want to say in Bill 23, it still applies to those directives, to those 23 communities. I think that's very well covered.

In his response, our good friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale made some good points about the previous government, which over a 10-year period did not have the intestinal fortitude to move ahead and make the tough decisions that needed to be made to protect and ensure that we'd have a quality health care system in the future. They snuck in with reducing beds here and there. They didn't close any hospitals but just sort of closed beds and snuck it along.

I also thought his comments about the investments of pharmaceutical companies here in Canada were interesting, particularly in Ontario. In the past, so many of those investments were in the US, Britain and Europe. But because of the change in the economy that's going on in this province, because of the changes in our health care system, pharmaceutical companies are seeing this as an ideal place to invest.

As I get back to my notes here and talk about hospital restructuring and the bill that's before us today, it's rather exciting to step back and see the kind of evolution that has happened in health care in this province, in this country, in the world, for that matter. Things like antibiotics and painkillers, straight through to organ transplants, are really helping patients, the tremendous advances we're experiencing in medicine: ultrasound, that we have become kind of blasé about today, CAT scans through to MRIs and, as the member from Scarborough Southwest just mentioned, tripling the

number of MRIs since we took office, more than all the others in Canada put together. We have things like two the lithotripsy units here in Ontario to break up kidney stones to overcome the suffering and pain that goes along with major surgery. The stones can be broken up by focusing ultrasounds on to them.

These are innovations that I'm sure were considered extreme when they first came out. At the turn of the century, the idea of doctors taking hearts and livers from brain-dead patients and successfully transplanting them into other patients who had lost their hearts or livers or had kidney failure, whatever, would have been considered as total fantasy and totally and absolutely impossible. It was only a little over 100 years ago that aspirin was actually invented as a chemical, a great pain-reliever that has many other side effects—helping reduce the clotting effect of blood. But it has certainly served us, coming along at the same time that powered flight by man was still an unfulfilled dream.

1710

We've moved to the technology, as we step into this millennium 100 years later, whereby we probed the core, the centre, not only of the body but also of the cell to understand DNA and be able to splice DNA, and it's turning out to be a treatment process and also a way of preventing some of the genetic diseases that we deal with. Certainly it has almost become an everyday experience in today's technology with bypass surgery, heart transplants. We're also looking at eradication of diseases like smallpox. It was eradicated, I'm guessing, about 10 to 15 years ago, and thanks to some of the Rotarians—more power to them; I think it's a tremendous challenge—their goal is to eliminate polio in the world. I certainly hope that they can.

This indeed has been a pretty exciting voyage that we've been through in the change in technology in health care. I stand here today and ask, as we move into restructuring, why should it be such a daunting, challenging task to streamline such a great system that we've grown to depend on? It really should be relatively simple to come up with a restructured system that would ensure that we would have this kind of health care service well into the next millennium. As I look at it, I think there's just one simple reason, and that's inertia over the 10 years, that lost decade from 1985 to 1995. This was a time when health care was bogged down with turf wars, all kinds of turf wars within individual institutions, between physicians and the government as they struggled with dwindling health care resources that were getting scarcer all the time. Mr Speaker, certainly you understand that, I'm sure.

Even as we were struggling with this, the doctors got dragged into this back in 1986 when they went on strike. Emergency rooms were shut down, and I can tell you, Mr Speaker, and certainly I'm sure you experienced it, this shutdown of emergency rooms was a tribute to the management skills of the Liberal and NDP government, as they combined in an unholy alliance between 1985 and 1987. After that, what were they going to do? They had

to do something. The doctors were going to go on strike and be nasty, so they started to close beds. Of course, the NDP got pretty excited about the Liberals closing beds and ganted and ragged and carried on.

Then what happened after 1990? The NDP closed beds. So from 1985 to 1995, 10,000 acute care hospital beds were closed in the province. That equalled 30-plus medium-sized hospitals, but no bricks or mortar; 10,000 acute care beds but not a single hospital was closed. Also during that period not one single long-term-care bed was created in this province, indeed a record that the NDP and Liberals should be very ashamed of. The words that come to my mind are "spineless" and "shortsightedness." Those are the terms that describe their lack of action at that time.

Certainly dramatic measures were needed to clean up this mess, and certainly this government, when it took office, was prepared to do just that. Is it any wonder that the doctors were fed up, that the nurses were fed up and that the patients were demanding change?

We are moving forward in hospital restructuring. This bill is about ensuring that those many recommendations made by the HSRC—those orders—will be carried out. Such legislation is indeed necessary. Although the restructuring was difficult, there is no question that it was necessary. It was necessary to complete and carry it out so that we would end up with a fully integrated health care system, one where the silos have been broken down, which provides a seamless continuum of care where the patients come first. A goal of our government was to provide top quality health care to Ontarians at a price they can afford.

I have to confess that I have a real vested interest in this bill and to ensure that restructuring moves forward, because in my riding I have two new hospitals. One is nearing completion in construction, and hopefully come April or May they will be moving into it. That is the Trenton Memorial Hospital in Quinte west. The second one is in the west part of my riding of Northumberland, where the Cobourg and Port Hope hospitals have been brought together under one roof. Come April, it's planned that there will be a sod-turning ceremony for a new facility to be built on the west side of Cobourg.

This restructuring, when completed, will ensure that there are modern, up-to-date hospitals in the riding that will be there with state-of-the-art equipment and with technology. These will provide new services and, as a spinoff, will help to attract and retain new doctors in these underserved areas. In rural Ontario, it is indeed a challenge to attract physicians. They will have the latest technology, which will include telemedicine, where local doctors can consult with specialists in far-off cities such as Toronto or London and, at a touch of a button, will be able to consult. These innovations and this ability is only possible because of the unprecedented reinvestment and the unprecedented restructuring that we've carried out here in the province. Without that, it certainly could never, ever happen.

There is no question that during this time of transition we need to ensure that hospitals are able to set appropriate timelines for the start and the finish of restructuring projects. We also need to make sure that they are indeed able to provide the best possible care to patients during that restructuring time. Changes to legislation contained in this bill will indeed give us that ability.

It's interesting to hear some of the comments that are being made around the province about getting on with restructuring. We're hearing that on a regular basis. We're hearing about the need for flexibility. The Ontario Hospital Association and the hospital CEOs themselves have asked that we provide the flexibility that they need to complete the hospital restructuring.

If you'll bear with me, I have a couple of quotes that I'd like to share with you and read into the record. One is from Tony Dagnone, president and CEO of the London Health Sciences Centre. He was recently quoted saying, "We believe the Minister of Health must have the authority to shape and transform health care in the face of future needs of Ontario citizens."

Yet another, and this quote comes from Joseph De Mora, president and CEO of the Sudbury Regional Hospital—I am sure that is quite familiar to the member from Nickel Belt who just recently spoke—"I appreciate that your government had the courage to undertake long-overdue restructuring and ask that you retain these powers to complete this important initiative."

These indeed are very strong statements on the part of these hospital CEOs. Also, many of their colleagues echo these same sentiments. For example, Mr De Mora's comments are particularly gratifying to me as he talks about you "had the courage." I can tell you, with the difficulties in my own riding with the closure of the Port Hope hospital, it took a lot of courage. It was not easy. A lot of us have faced similar situations, where it took a lot of courage to stand up and carry out our convictions. He went on to say that you "had the courage to undertake long-overdue hospital restructuring," and courage indeed it was.

Ontario is faced with a growing and aging population. Maybe in another way it took courage, but also, did we have a choice? We did have to make things happen. We have changing demographics and, with those changing demographics, if we hadn't made these changes to the system, I think we would have been facing an unprecedented failure as we entered the early new millennium. What a shame, as we've come through one century with such tremendous changes in technology, to move into the next millennium and have it all collapse just because a government didn't have the intestinal fortitude to do what was right.

1720

I think many of us are quite aware of the aging population and how once you get over 45, 50 or 60, the costs you incur to health care are tremendous. Some of the things that were occurring in the past were just Band-Aids used as stopgap measures that were not at all effective. If we hadn't done this, it would have been one

of the greatest mistakes a government has made since the Liberals asked Patti Starr to be their fundraising representative.

The HSRC spent some three years working with communities across Ontario to plan modern, up-to-date hospital services. To do that, tough decisions had to be made, but they were tough decisions to ensure that the highest quality health care services can be delivered to our patients across Ontario. That's exactly what was happening in my riding. They were tough decisions, but the end result is going to be two new hospitals.

I mentioned the Trenton Memorial Hospital a few minutes ago. Do you know that was promised by the Liberal government, and it was promised by the NDP government. Neither of them came through. We didn't promise it until the HSRC came through with the orders. It's now being built and will be opened in the year 2000, the beginning of the millennium.

From those examples, I can assure you that we are reinvesting absolutely every penny that's been saved in hospital restructuring into front-line patient care. In the next four years, we are committed to increase spending by another 20%. But also I think it's interesting to look: Yes, we have changed the amount of dollars in the hospitals sector. But let me assure you that being well or in treatment does not all happen inside hospital walls. We have to recognize that health care extends outside of hospital walls. We have increased health care spending. I know the Liberals only guaranteed \$17.4 billion and weren't going any further, but we increased that spending from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion, and that was in spite of the fact that the federal Liberals have cut transfer payments for health by \$2.8 billion per annum. If you add social services to that, they cut over \$3 billion in transfer payments to this province.

Just some of the things that have happened in my own riding: In Northumberland county, health spending has increased by \$24.4 million since 1995. For example, the Campbellford hospital has received another \$801,000 since we took office. The Northumberland Health Care Corp, the Cobourg-Port Hope combination, has received in excess of \$2.8 million. I'm sure the member from Prince Edward-Hastings would appreciate hearing this one, because it includes a hospital that he's responsible for in Belleville and Picton, but also includes Trenton and the one at Bancroft. They have received in excess of \$12 million extra since we took office. We couldn't afford those dollars if this restructuring hadn't been carried out.

We're doing what's necessary to guarantee the future of public health care in Ontario. Before the last election the Liberals spent considerable time chasing ambulances around the province and harassing staff in busy emergency rooms to score cheap political points, but it didn't work.

I know there are still problems. In any system as complex and as big as the health care system here in Ontario, I don't think it's all that difficult to find a problem here or there, but it's really a disservice that they

would do that kind of thing to our highly motivated health care people. There are thousands and thousands of dedicated professionals out there giving of their time and talents to provide top quality health care.

I know from personal experience. This past summer I went through and was faced with a rather life-threatening personal health situation and saw the system from the inside. I can assure you that I received the kind of care that was thorough, that was appropriate in our health care system. I was in and out of four different hospitals. I saw this first hand and certainly compliment the staff.

In closing, I really want to emphasize the appreciation I have for the health care system and all those unsung heroes in our health care system who give of themselves on a daily basis. Their contributions are absolutely exceptional. The nursing care I saw in the various hospitals was absolutely consistent and top-notch.

We should recognize these contributions as we go through a very difficult transition period. We're moving from a system that only placed hospitals and bricks and mortar at the centre of the wheel. That should not be the centre of the wheel; that should not be the hub. We're moving to a system that places patients at the hub, a system where services and results are the focus, rather than the turf wars we experienced from 1985 through to 1995. Those turf wars were over diminishing resources. We saw that under the guidance of the Liberals and the NDP.

In short, an integrated system where patients can expect to receive the right services in the right place at the right time is what restructuring is all about. That is the goal of health care restructuring in Ontario. It is a lofty and ambitious goal, one that I certainly can fully and enthusiastically support, as I do this bill, Bill 23.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This government certainly takes pride in making statements that it makes tough decisions, and, the inference is that if it's a tough decision, it's good decision. It is not always a good decision. The decision to get rid of nurses four years ago was a tough decision, but it was a very bad decision.

The public is becoming more and more cynical about politicians. I can understand that because they hear the rhetoric about how good hospital care is, but when they arrive at the hospital, there's no bed for their loved one or they're waiting for emergency care. They hear we're spending more money on health than we ever have. I won't dispute that number because it costs money to close down hospitals, it costs money to give severance payments and it costs money for this commission that's doing the closing down. But those aren't health dollars, those are anti-health dollars. Those are expenditures that have in fact hurt the people.

We need to also reflect that with the increased health costs, in some ways they reflect our population. We have an aging population. I'm a baby boomer. I know that my generation is starting to use more and more health care dollars. But they do not understand why, if things are so

much better, we have to wait in our area four to five to six months for an MRI. There may be more MRIs than there have ever been in all of Canada, but we also have the largest population in Canada.

The question is, how many machines do we have per person? Unfortunately the average person takes five months to get an MRI. But ironically, if you're a dog or a cat, you can get an MRI done within a week or so, or if you're a baseball player, a football player and you're prepared to pay extra, which sounds to me like two-tier medicine, then you can get that health care.

The question isn't, have we made tough decisions? The question is, have we improved health care? The answer is no.

1730

Mr Martin: There we go again, the member across the way, from Northumberland, talking about the 10 lost years and the wonderful last five years. I have to tell you that more and more people I talk to out there are wishing for those 10 years back, because what's happening under this government is so destructive and so devastating to communities, and no more so than in the health care system.

Let's just have a look at one of the articles in the paper today:

"Four out of five Canadians believe that home care should be a free, universal health care program, a new poll indicates. But the reality is quite different: One quarter of patients already pay significant expenses and one in nine patients needing help say they have no home care because they cannot afford it."

Is that what we want? Is that where this government is taking us? Is that what these last four to five years were supposed to be about? Well, I suggest, no. This government cut \$800 million from hospital budgets, and now we're hearing that they want to cut another \$100 million. When are they going to be satisfied? When is enough enough? How far are hospitals supposed to cut? Last week the Minister of Health told the Ontario Hospital Association she would introduce a new hospital funding formula that would focus on efficiency. What is her definition of efficiency? Is it cutting corners to run in the black rather than the red? Is it leaving patients in hallways? Is it leaving new equipment unopened in crates because they don't have the staff to operate it?

What about the needs of Ontarians? Where does that fit into this government's new formula? The health care needs of Hamiltonians are such that the Hamilton Health Sciences Centre Corp is going to come up short by \$40 million. Windsor is coming up short too. The Hôtel-Dieu Grace has a deficit of \$8 million. The Windsor Regional's deficit is \$7 million. They've told the government that they can't cut any further to cover that deficit without seriously undermining the health care of the people of Windsor.

This government is seriously undermining the health care of all people who live in Ontario.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): This country, I think, let alone this province, is going to—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Thank you, member for Sault Ste Marie; always as eloquent as you normally are.

This country has got to enter into a debate on health care, and the health care debate has to begin in every province. Every province is dealing with the same issue. In the 1970s in this country, the federal government transferred 50 per cent of health care costs.

Mr Martin: You're going to blame the feds.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I'm just telling you the facts, Mr Martin. You blame it on who you want.

They transferred 50 per cent of the costs for health care. Today transfer payments come out to 11 per cent. I think any fair-minded individual, even Mr Martin, would probably agree that we need a debate with respect to health care costs and where responsibility begins and ends. It is very difficult to ask the provinces of this nation to carry forward 39% in new-cost dollars over the last two decades in health care expenditures and expect the same levels of service, the same levels of expectations. The difficulty that you have is quite simple. If the federal government is going to opt out of health care—I'm saying, if they want to opt out, they can—we need a good public debate about opting out of health care. They've got to start telling the public out there that they're not prepared to spend money on health care any more. I accept that decision, as a provincial government. But right now their claim is that they're demanding certain levels be expended, certain levels be allowed, but allowing fewer and fewer tax dollars federally to the provincial issue. Now, even this is simple enough for the member for Sault Ste Marie to understand.

Interjection: Maybe not.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Probably not, but I'm hoping that when he examines on balance the fairness of this, even in his propriety on sensitive issues, he'll understand.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I have to say that I do agree with the fact that we have to have a good debate about health care, but debate that's important is what works and what doesn't work. Unfortunately what seems to happen on the other side of the House is that there is no discussion as to management. There's discussion about cuts, there's discussion about restructuring, but the management of those cuts, the management of why we're cutting and whether or not hospitals are funded based on the demand for services—we're restructuring in our community. We have all our ducks in a row, and unfortunately the ministry has not given its approval. While we're waiting for this, we're wasting \$2 million a year—I spoke to the director today—because the ministry cannot make a decision on this restructuring. We've been working on it for five years. Our costs have increased while we're waiting, after the announcements have been made. Again, we have to operate two hospitals that have been downsized. Everything has been reallocated. But it's costing us \$2 million every year because the ministry can't get its act together.

We have an MRI, but the reason we have one is because we are purchasing one; it's not coming with dollars from the ministry.

Interjections.

Ms Di Cocco: Yes, unfortunately, the ministry says that it's doing it, and we are the ones who are buying it.

Mr Galt: I'm very concerned about the member for Sarnia-Lambton and some of her comments. It would be a very career-limiting move, I would think, criticizing the federal Liberals for cutting health care. I can't believe it when she talks about cuts, because the only cuts to health care that have been made in Ontario have been made by the federal Liberals, your cousins down in Ottawa. That's where the cuts have been coming from. You've watched the increases in the province of Ontario steadily, year after year after year. The only cuts in health care have come from your federal Liberals. So I hope that wasn't a career-limiting move for you.

I think it was kind of interesting a couple of comments that the member for Etobicoke Centre made, that there should be a debate on health care Canada-wide. If you read the Fraser Institute and see what's happening across Canada in the lineups, whether it be for MRIs or CAT scans or treatment for cancer, it's increasing in absolutely every province. So whose problem is it if it's increasing in every province? How many nurses' strikes have we had across Canada? Almost every province has had a nurses' strike. This isn't the problem of the individual provinces; it's a problem of what's going on in health care.

The costs of the original health care were 50/50—50% from the feds, 50% from the province. That was what it was based on. It's not based on the Constitution. The only power that the federal government has here is the power of the purse, and now it's coming up to the trough and paying a reasonable amount in support.

In Ontario, they went all the way down to 7.6% a year or so ago. They have rallied back up to slightly over 11%, but that's a long way from the original 50% that they were committed to, that they were going to support health care at here in the province of Ontario. So a debate across Canada: Do the federal Liberals really want to work with health care or do they want to get out? I think that is the bottom line and that's really the outstanding question.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I regret the departure of my friend the Minister of Labour, because I thought he did make a good point. I know he's busy, and I don't mean to distract him, but he does make a good point about a more serious debate about the financing of public health programs.

I wanted tonight to deal with part III of Bill 23, which concerns transferring from the Health Services Restructuring Commission those directive powers vested in it to the Minister of Health. I want to do so on the basis of my own experience in eastern Ontario. Before I do, I wanted to take a moment to just simply reflect a little bit about the politics of hospital closure in the province over the last 25 years.

A number of members from the government are quite right to point out what did not happen in the period of time from about 1977 through to 1996. There was an 18-to-20-year period when various governments—the later Davis government, the Peterson government and the Rae government—didn't do a great deal insofar as a dramatic restructuring of the hospital sector.

I think thoughtful and fair-minded people might want to ask the question: Was there any particular reason why that happened? I want to submit to you that there was. The early Davis government, in the person of Frank Stuart Miller, P. Eng, MPP for Muskoka and Minister of Health, set out in 1974 to restructure three or four hospitals: Toronto Doctors, Clinton, Durham—the Minister of Education may remember. There were a couple of others in that part of southwestern Ontario. I'm not here to rethresh the old straw. Let me simply say that Mr Miller's plan did not meet with a great deal of support. In fact, Frank returned from the campaign rather weather-beaten and woebegone, and it is fair to say that nobody fought him more successfully and more creatively and more vigorously than the late Larry Grossman, member from St Andrew-St Patrick.

1740

Mr Grossman was doing what all good local members would do, only Larry did it with a panache that was only his province. The point of that exercise and the point of that story is that an effort was made by a bunch of politicians, presumably well-intentioned, and it just blew up in their faces.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The public wasn't ready.

Mr Conway: Well, the public may not have been ready, but it was simply a disaster. So nothing happened for a number of years.

It is also interesting to observe that over the intervening period of nearly 20 years, as I recall, one hospital was closed. It was a small clinic, a small hospital in Burk's Falls.

Hon Mr Wilson: It was never closed.

Mr Conway: It was closed. I happened to visit the hospital before it was closed and it got closed in a power play, not under the early Harris government; it was closed in the days of the Rae government. As far as I could tell in talking to those people at east Parry Sound, at Burk's Falls, they got caught in a crossfire between the Ministry of Health and their larger sponsoring hospital at Huntsville.

A long period of time occurred when not much happened by way of hospital closures. I think it is a prudent thing for all of us to recall why that happened. It's all well and good for later-day partisans to get up and in a wonderfully Stalinist way reflect a very incomplete, or portray a very selective, history. We've had quite a nice treatment of that, particularly from the previous speaker.

It was three years ago this week that the Health Services Restructuring Commission came to my community and ordered the Pembroke Civic Hospital closed. I want to take a moment tonight to reflect on my own

situation, not just in Pembroke but in eastern Ontario. Let me say at the outset that there were problems in Pembroke for which we, as a community, had some very clear responsibility.

There was a failure in local community leadership to deal with the duplication of services between those two facilities which had served the community well for nearly 100 years in both cases. I'm not going to stand here tonight and point an accusative finger at the government or its emanation, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and say it was all their fault, because that would not be fair. There was a failure in community leadership to move forward with some kind of an adjustment plan that would have gotten at the evident duplication that existed in some program areas between those two hospitals in the city of Pembroke operating not more than six or seven blocks apart.

Having said that, having acknowledged that there was a problem, a failure of community leadership—and I accept my share of the blame in that respect. I am not as an elected official able to stand here and say that retrospectively I was happy with everything that I did or didn't do. So along comes the commission in December. After our health council had been working for some months at a plan of its own, the driving force bureaucratically at the health council was quite a remarkable woman named Lyn Bowering, who certainly was a woman with very definite views and not inconsiderable influence. Their work was taken up by the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and what do they recommend three years ago this week? They said: "There is a need for only one, not two hospitals in Pembroke. We've had experts from Price Waterhouse and others tell us that all of the services in the institutional hospital or the hospital sector in Pembroke can be combined at one of the sites."

The consolidation at the Pembroke General, we are told, would cost about \$5 million in renovation and restructuring costs at the Civic Hospital. We were told it would cost approximately \$9 million.

So it was decided by the commission, on the basis of those data, that there would be one hospital and it would be the Pembroke General. The Civic Hospital was ordered closed. I repeat that a key part of the analysis that saw our beloved Civic Hospital closed was that all of the hospital services could be consolidated at the Pembroke General site and the renovation costs would be approximately \$5 million; that in December of 1996.

We may not have liked it. There was a great deal of pain, particularly on the part of those hundreds and thousands of people who over the years have been closely associated with the Civic Hospital. I think all members understand the sentiment that attaches to a facility as important as a hospital. You do not close a hospital, whether it's the Pembroke Civic, the Sudbury General, the hospitals in Thunder Bay or anywhere else—St Mary's in Kitchener—you simply don't close those facilities or try to close those hospitals without a very real hurt being felt in the community.

The Pembroke Civic nonetheless was ordered closed. The Pembroke Civic was ordered closed because, we were told, it would cost approximately \$5 million to do the renovating over at the General. Three years later, we are now told that the true cost of the restructuring and related costs at the Pembroke General is \$24 million. That's before a shovel goes in the ground.

I hope, as I said in question period the other day, my colleagues on all sides of the House heard that: \$5 million has become \$24 million. Her Majesty's provincial government, if those data are to be credited and approved, will now, using a 70%-30% formula, be responsible for something in the order of \$16 million. And much more importantly, if the costs are not \$5 million but \$24 million, the local share to be borne by the people of Pembroke and area will have gone from approximately \$1.5 million, which would be 30% of \$5 million, to approximately \$8 million now, if we use 30% of \$24 million.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I say to my friend O'Toole, with all seriousness, \$8 million is a very substantial amount of money for the Pembroke and area community. You know, we are going to be asked later this week—

Interjections.

Mr Conway: This is very serious, I say to my friends opposite, because we are constantly reminded about the need for—in this case and this week in municipal government restructuring—greater clarity, more transparency, more accountability. Do we understand what that means? This was on our watch. This was not done by or with someone else. This was Her Majesty's provincial government in Ontario, on Mr Harris's watch.

Bright people were hired by that commission, very good people, I have to believe. They told my community, they told the minister—the now Minister of Energy, the then Minister of Health—that in Pembroke, your costs were going to be approximately \$5 million. Now I'm going to say this and I'm going to repeat this, because in a week where we are talking about more transparency, more accountability for and from politicians, I have to ask the House, "Where do we stand with our responsibilities?" An increase of over four and a half times in the space of less than three years. An increase in the local cost of potentially \$6.5 million. That's before there's a shovel in the ground.

To whom do the people of Pembroke and area go now for redress? To whom do the people in the Pembroke Civic community say, "Well, if that's the true case, if the actual figure was never \$5 million or \$10 million or \$15 million or \$20 million, but \$24 million, how valid was the whole analysis in the first place?" On whom do we lay this responsibility? From whom do we, as citizens in Pembroke and area, expect accountability?

1750

I see in today's Pembroke Observer an interesting story coming from a person I don't know, Mr Ron Awde, who is, I gather, a consultant to the Pembroke General and, according to the story in the Observer today, was

part of the Price Waterhouse team in 1996-97 that looked at these renovation costs. What does Mr Awde tell the readers of today's *Pembroke Observer*? "Don't Knock the Cost," he says in a big story in our paper today. Mr Awde says that, oh, well, the true costs were always more than those early estimates. My favourite quote from this Mr Awde is, "I have not a moment's doubt that Pembroke is capable of meeting its part of the capital funding. No doubt at all," says the aforementioned Mr Awde.

Well, well, well: \$5 million has become \$24 million; our local share has gone from \$1.5 million to \$8 million. What do I do about that as a member of the Legislature, to say nothing of being a citizen of Pembroke and area? If these data are nearly correct, somebody has just given us a multi-million-dollar increase in our local share. To whom do I go for redress? If I am the Minister of Finance for Ontario, to whom do I go to voice my concern, because if this is going on in Pembroke, what's going on in all the other places?

I can tell you what is going on in Ottawa. In Ottawa, what do we have? We have a very popular, very well regarded Grace Hospital now closed, a place where the administrator, according to a recent report in the *Ottawa Citizen*, I think was earning something like \$25,000 or \$30,000. The lowest-paid top executive officer in the hospital sector was at the Grace and his facility is now closed.

You've heard the story about the Montfort, and I won't get into that. We've got apparently a real tug of war going on at the Ottawa Hospital between the Civic and the General campuses, and by all reports from people whose judgment and knowledge I trust, we haven't solved very much as to who is going to do what and where. Most recently we've been treated in the national capital press to a debate about the neuroscience program: Where is it going and how is it going to be organized? I'm told that is not an isolated incident. And we've got the lithotripter in a crate over at the Riverside, bought and paid for by the community, \$1 million and it's in a crate.

To whom do I now go to ask for some accountability? Three years out, where am I, given the benchmarks that were established just three years ago? I'm not here to say that it was going to be easy. This is the most difficult, delicate surgery any government is ever going to attempt: very difficult, extremely difficult. But I want to say to the House in a very cold-hearted way, when I stand here and say, "All right, what was promised three years ago in my community and at what price, and how are we doing three years later with the performance?" that there is quite a gap between the promise of 1996 and the performance of 1999.

What terrifies me as a senior member of the Legislature is that in my community we haven't got a shovel in the ground. The auditor tells us our overall costs are at least double what we imagined, and I'm going to be very interested to find out at the end of the day—I'll probably be dead and gone before that cycle is completed.

Many communities are going to have to get some answers fairly soon. For example, in my community, one of the questions I would have for the Minister of Health is: At what point are you actually going to flow your money? Does our community need to raise 20%, 40%, 60% or 80%? What per cent do we have to raise locally before major capital dollars begin to flow? How is that going to be handled in other communities? At \$24 million Pembroke, in the relative scheme of things—relative to Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton and London—will be a relatively small capital project. Where do we stand relative to some of the bigger projects? I can imagine one or two projects in Toronto and Ottawa taking up very substantial amounts of the capital cash provided by whosoever is the minister of finance.

My friends, accountability, transparency, clarity: Who could be opposed to these things? No reasonable person could be opposed to these things. As I look at the local government bills, I say to myself: Are there some issues I would want to address? Absolutely. But on the basis of my experience with hospital restructuring, I would be very nervous about embracing yet another master plan concocted from on high.

I was just thinking today, when people were talking about the local government bills—one of the advantages, or disadvantages, of having been around for as long as I have is that we're now going to radically alter the magical cure we offered Haldimand-Norfolk 25 or 27 years ago. It's truly too bad that the late James N. Allan is not alive. And we're absolutely confident that our magical cure is going to be better than the magical cures we are now going to fix.

But back to health care. My colleagues from Thunder Bay, Sarnia and the Belleville area have made plain how important and how sensitive the whole hospital sector is. Not easy? Absolutely. Were there problems? Yes. But if one takes a dispassionate, objective look at the performance of the Health Services Restructuring Commission in Pembroke versus the promise of three years ago, you would certainly not take much comfort in what awaits for patient care over the next few transitional years.

Ms Martel: I'm going to follow up on the comments made by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and refer to the experience in my own community, because it is much the same as what he has experienced in Pembroke. The only difference is the cost of the overrun for construction of the new hospital in relation to the cost of the overrun in Pembroke.

Under our government the restructuring process was underway. A decision had been made locally by the district health council and a number of other people who had had input to the process about what would happen, and their recommendation was that one of the three hospitals would close. I remind members of the Conservative Party that this process took almost two years to complete, and there was every opportunity for people in our community to have their say. There were numerous public consultations, it was done by local people, it was done with the hospitals and with commun-

ity-based agencies, and there was some accountability for the decision that was made. That was completely different with respect to what the commission did.

The commission came in and, if I recall correctly, had one afternoon of private, behind-closed-doors meetings with a handful of stakeholders, heard what they had to say and left the community and made their recommendations some months later. Of course, their recommendation was to close two of the three hospitals and have the remaining hospital as the new regional centre—no accountability, no public input, no public consultation, just done behind closed doors. We are now in the posi-

tion where the government has had to intervene once, to deal with the cost overrun in Sudbury. This was done a number of months ago. I suspect we'll be in a position to have the government intervene again, because we are now in another \$8-million deficit position with respect to the new regional hospital, and it's not finished. Construction has only just begun. We've had one set of trouble and another to come. Someone's got to pay for it.

The Acting Speaker: It being six of the clock this House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Agostino, Dominic (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition
Amott, Ted (PC)	Waterloo-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC)	Nepean-Carleton	Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Environnement
Bartolucci, Rick (L)	Sudbury	deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition
Beaubien, Marcel (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Bisson, Gilles (ND)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bountrogianni, Marie (L)	Hamilton Mountain	
Boyer, Claudette (L)	Ottawa-Vanier	
Bradley, James J. (L)	St Catharines	
Brown, Michael A. (L)	Algoma-Manitoulin	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Bryant, Michael (L)	St Paul's	
Caplan, David (L)	Don Valley East / -Est	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC)	Oakville	Speaker / Président
Christopherson, David (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Richesses naturelles
Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Broadview-Greenwood	chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Clark, Brad (PC)	Stoney Creek	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Cleary, John C. (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	
Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC)	Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Coburn, Brian (PC)	Carleton-Gloucester	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Colle, Mike (L)	Eglinton-Lawrence	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Conway, Sean G. (L)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Cordiano, Joseph (L)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Crozier, Bruce (L)	Essex	
Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Curling, Alvin (L)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
DeFaria, Carl (PC)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Dombrowsky, Leona (L)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	
Duncan, Dwight (L)	Windsor-St Clair	opposition House leader / chef parlementaire de l'opposition
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement
Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC)	Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation
Elliott, Brenda (PC)	Guelph-Wellington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation and minister responsible for seniors and women / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs et ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC)	Parry Sound-Muskoka	Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Whitby-Ajax	Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Galt, Doug (PC)	Northumberland	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Gerretsen, John (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	
Gilchrist, Steve (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	
Gill, Raminder (PC)	Bramalea-Gore- Malton-Springdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Travail
Gravelle, Michael (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	
Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	
Hampton, Howard (ND)	Kenora-Rainy River	Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC)	Nipissing	Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif
Hastings, John (PC)	Etobicoke North / -Nord	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Transports
Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion
Hoy, Pat (L)	Chatham-Kent Essex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC)	Erie-Lincoln	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme
Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Johnson, Bert (PC)	Perth-Middlesex	Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Kells, Morley (PC)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	
Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Parkdale-High Park	
Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC)	Oak Ridges	Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip, deputy government House leader / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement, leader parlementaire adjoint
Kormos, Peter (ND)	Niagara Centre / -Centre	
Kwinter, Monte (L)	York Centre / -Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	
Lankin, Frances (ND)	Beaches-East York	
Levac, Dave (L)	Brant	
Marchese, Rosario (ND)	Trinity-Spadina	
Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Martel, Shelley (ND)	Nickel Belt	
Martin, Tony (ND)	Sault Ste Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	Parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General and minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire au procureur général et ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Maves, Bart (PC)	Niagara Falls	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Mazzilli, Frank (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General / adjoint parlementaire au solliciteur général
McGuinty, Dalton (L)	Ottawa South / -Sud	Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition
McLeod, Lyn (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	
Molinari, Tina R. (PC)	Thornhill	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / adjointe parlementaire à la ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York North / -Nord	assistant deputy government whip / whip adjointe suppléante du gouvernement
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey	
Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	
Newman, Dan (PC)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Durham	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire au ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Parsons, Ernie (L)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Patten, Richard (L)	Ottawa Centre / -Centre	
Peters, Steve (L)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Phillips, Gerry (L)	Scarborough-Agincourt	
Pupatello, Sandra (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	
Ramsay, David (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Davenport	
Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Sergio, Mario (L)	York West / -Ouest	deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition
Skarica, Toni (PC)	Wentworth-Burlington	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire au ministre des Finances
Smitherman, George (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	
Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Spina, Joseph (PC)	Brampton Centre / -Centre	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Tourism / adjoint parlementaire au ministre du Tourisme
Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Peterborough	
Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC)	Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	
Tilson, David (PC)	Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	
Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC)	Markham	Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC)	Don Valley West / -Ouest	Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement
Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Wood, Bob (PC)	London West / -Ouest	Parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire au président du Conseil de gestion
Young, David (PC)	Willowdale	Parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education / adjoint parlementaire à la ministre de l'Éducation

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczkowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

CONTENTS

Monday 6 December 1999

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Toronto council	
Mr Sergio	1083
Pharmaceutical research	
Mr Gill	1083
Wine industry	
Mr Crozier	1083
Ramadan	
Mr Wood	1084
Sarah Thompson	
Mr Parsons	1084
Cancer prevention	
Ms Churley	1084
RIDE program	
Mr Tascona	1084
Millennium memento	
Mr Bartolucci	1085
Paul and Anne Burnham	
Mr Galt	1085

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on estimates	
The Deputy Speaker	1085
Report deemed reported	1086

FIRST READINGS

Fewer Municipal Politicians Act, 1999,	
Bill 25, <i>Mr Clement</i>	
Agreed to	1086
Audit Amendment Act, 1999,	
Bill 26, <i>Mr Sterling</i>	
Agreed to	1088

MOTIONS

House sittings	
Mr Sterling	1088
Agreed to	1088

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Municipal restructuring	
Mr Clement	1088
Mr McGuinty	1089
Mr Hampton	1089
Mr Marchese	1090

ORAL QUESTIONS

Firearms control	
Mr McGuinty	1093
Mr Harris	1093
Mr Bryant	1096
Mr Flaherty	1096

Municipal restructuring

Mr McGuinty	1094
Mr Harris	1094

Family violence

Mr Hampton	1095
Mr Harris	1095

Municipal referenda

Mr Hampton	1096
Mr Harris	1096

Academic testing

Ms Mushinski	1097
Mrs Ecker	1097

Ipperwash Provincial Park

Mr Phillips	1098
Mr Tsubouchi	1098

Skills development

Mr Mazzilli	1098
Mr Palladini	1098

Transportation of dangerous goods

Ms Martel	1099
Mr Turnbull	1099

Textbooks

Mrs Dombrowsky	1100
Mrs Ecker	1100

Violence against women

Mr Galt	1100
Mr Tsubouchi	1101

PETITIONS

Air quality	
Mr Hoy	1101
Karla Homolka	
Ms Mushinski	1101

SECOND READINGS

Ministry of Health and Long-Term

Care Statute Law Amendment

Act, 1999, Bill 23, *Mrs Witmer*

Mrs McLeod	1102, 1107
Ms Martel	1105, 1107, 1111, 1118
Mr Wilson	1106
Mr Bradley	1106, 1111
Mr Newman	1106, 1110
Mr Newman	1110
Mr Gill	1111
Mr Galt	1112, 1116
Mr Parsons	1114
Mr Stockwell	1115
Ms Di Cocco	1115
Mr Conway	1116
Debate deemed adjourned	1119

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mr Colle	1085
Ms Di Cocco	1085

Speaker's ruling

Mr Duncan	1086, 1087
The Deputy Speaker	1087
Mr Sterling	1087
Mr Christopherson	1087

Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Mrs Johns	1090
Mrs Boyer	1091
Ms Churley	1092

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 6 décembre 1999

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 1999 réduisant le nombre	
De conseillers municipaux,	
projet de loi 25, <i>M. Clement</i>	
Adoptée	1086
Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi	
sur la vérification des comptes	
publics, projet de loi 26,	
<i>M. Sterling</i>	
Adoptée	1088

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois	
en ce qui concerne le ministère	
de la Santé et des Soins de	
longue durée, projet de loi 23,	
<i>M^{me} Witmer</i>	
Débat présumé ajourné	1119

AUTRES TRAVAUX

Journée du souvenir et d'action contre	
la Violence faite aux femmes	
<i>M^{me} Boyer</i>	1091



No. 23B

N° 23B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 6 December 1999

Lundi 6 décembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulé en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 décembre 1999

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SERGEANT RICK McDONALD
MEMORIAL ACT
(SUSPECT APPREHENSION
PURSUITS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 COMMÉMORANT LE
SERGEANT RICK McDONALD
(POURSUITES EN VUE D'APPRÉHENDER
DES SUSPECTS)

Mr Mazzilli, on behalf of Mr Tsubouchi, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act in memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of suspect apprehension pursuits / Loi commémorant le sergent Rick McDonald et modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les poursuites en vue d'appréhender des suspects.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): This is a very emotional bill for me, as I've met the family of Sergeant Rick McDonald. It's a pleasure for me, on behalf of police officers and the family of Sergeant Rick McDonald, to address their concerns.

I'm pleased to tell members that our government will be introducing amendments to the Highway Traffic Act. These amendments, if passed by the Legislature, would provide for court-ordered driver's licence suspensions of not less than 10 years and up to life, with the suspension to be consecutive to any other suspension in cases involving death or bodily harm; increase existing provisions for driver's licence suspensions for escape-by-flight offences to five years; double the fines for failing to stop for police, up to \$10,000; and introduce a fine for escape-by-flight offences, up to \$25,000.

The amendments would also impose a minimum jail term of 14 days for flight and a maximum of up to six months in jail.

Criminals who try to take reckless flight from police, endangering innocent citizens and police, must be held accountable. All too often critics point the finger at the wrong people. It's time to get tough on those who think they can get away with endangering the lives of police officers and innocent bystanders. We have to make sure that our streets are safer, and start by putting the blame

where it belongs, and that blame belongs on the criminals who take reckless flight from the police.

Criminals fleeing from the police must be stopped quickly and safely. We will not solve this problem until we make it clear to the offenders that attempting to escape from police is not an option.

In consultation with Ontario's police services, our government has already taken action to better train and equip Ontario police for situations in which criminals take flight from police. Last April, for the first time in Ontario, we announced the development of new regulations under the Police Services Act to provide better guidelines for police officers who find themselves in pursuit situations. The guidelines are in the hands of Ontario's police services and they are developing procedures and ensuring their officers are familiar with these guidelines.

I can tell you that this is not an easy area, developing guidelines that officers have to follow while pursuing a vehicle, making the decision about whether someone's life is in danger, the seriousness of the offence, the identification of the person. To develop these guidelines, on which officers often at a moment's notice have to make a decision whether they are following the guideline or not, is not easy. We're certainly asking for their input into the guidelines, but at the same time we want to allow the public to have their say on the guidelines as to when they do not want police to pursue vehicles.

At the same time, the Ontario Police College is developing new training procedures to complement the regulation and to encourage alternatives to pursuit. We have provided funding for the purchase of tire-deflation devices and helicopter pilot projects.

While we're on the tire-deflation devices, these are rather new in Ontario. They've been used for a couple of years and they've been used successfully despite it being a tragedy in the case of Sergeant Rick McDonald, where a tire-deflation device was utilized and the officer was struck by a moving vehicle. I can assure you that any time a tire-deflation device is used, officers are usually in a dangerous position, and certainly training can only help reduce the consequences that happened to Sergeant McDonald. I don't know that we'll ever totally prevent that type of situation with the tire device alone.

It is our objective to have the toughest penalties for criminals who try to take reckless flight from the police. I can't say enough about this. Often at the end of a police pursuit, a police chase, whatever we may call it, we're all trying to assess what happened, what went wrong, what

went right. The reality is that we've likely failed because that pursuit took place in the first place. It likely should have been prevented before it took place, but nevertheless these things do take place, and how do we best deal with them?

Like many other Ontarians, I have seen people involved in police chases who at the end of the day are not penalized for that behaviour, and a week later or two weeks later, they repeat that behaviour by being involved in another police chase. I can assure you that police services have been working hard over the last decade on preventing chases. At one point police in this province pursued vehicles for just about any type of infraction. Be it a provincial infraction or a criminal infraction, a pursuit continued. Today, because of the guidelines, at certain points police pursuits are discontinued.

Again, on these new measures, dangerous driving is defined in the Criminal Code. If there is one thing that we as a government—our Premier, Mike Harris, or our Solicitor General, David Tsubouchi—have been calling on the federal government about, it is to deal with dangerous driving offences, and clearly police pursuits fall under those parameters. The federal government has essentially refused to deal with making penalties stiffer, harder on criminals who, through criminal acts, are generally suspended. The saving grace is that the licensing or suspension of drivers' licences is also a provincial jurisdiction, and we will be dealing with it with these tougher penalties, if I can point out, by imposing a minimum jail term of 14 days for flight, up to six months. That is the same as what the federal government has on a second conviction of impaired driving. That is how we view a police pursuit on a first attempt.

We believe it's time to stop blaming innocent bystanders, it's time to stop blaming police and it's time to stop blaming society; it's time to start blaming the criminals who consciously know that they have initiated a pursuit and that at the outcome there will be no consequences. In Ontario, with our government, there will be consequences.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'm pleased to speak today to Bill 22, the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act. I would also indicate to you that I'm going to share some time with the member for Sudbury on this side.

The Deputy Speaker: This is questions and comments.

Mr Levac: Sorry. I would take my time to respond to the member opposite. I've taken 30 seconds of confusion off my clock, so I'll make my comments short.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): It happens a lot around here.

Mr Levac: Absolutely.

In response to the member, a point that I'd like to make with him is that on this side we've already dedicated ourselves to quick passage of this bill. He can be assured of our concern, and the idea that anyone on this side or anybody in this Legislature would not want to

protect our police officers or our public is a misnomer and should never be portrayed. We support our members and the police service.

We also want to point out that the federal government is attempting to do some work on this level, and we will get some co-operation as long as we hold out our hand as a province to let the government of Canada know that we're speaking with one voice. Once that is done, I'm absolutely convinced that the federal government will act quickly, as long as we can co-operate together and do not throw sticks at them, and say: "Let's work together. The people of Ontario and the Legislature want to work together to ensure that criminals are punished."

I would absolutely guarantee the member that we're going to see some action on this from both the provincial and the federal government, and we're going to send a message very loud and clear that criminals will be punished under these circumstances.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm going to be speaking to this bill once the Liberals have made their presentations. That will be around 7:30, I suppose.

I want to tell the parliamentary assistant what we told the government when they introduced the bill for first reading: that we're going to support this bill. We've got things to say about it, though, but we're going to support it. I was a little anxious, and I congratulate the parliamentary assistant, because last week I went over and spoke to him one on one and explained to him that it was urgent that he persuade his House leader to get this bill called—obviously he was able to do that—because the bill risked lingering around long enough so that if it were to pass before the Christmas break, it would be done with one of those second and third readings in one day. I don't think that's right, because there are observations that have to be made on the theme of this bill, the theme of this legislation.

We called upon the House leader at the House leaders' meeting to be sure that there was debate here on second reading, and there will be some today, not as much as we would like but we appreciate the need to get this thing rolling, and certainly there is the need for committee hearings.

1900

I hope the government remains committed to modest hearings—I appreciate modest—perhaps two days of committee hearings. I wish they could be longer but I appreciate the time frame we're in, because there are some observations that have to be made, some input that has to come, perhaps there are some amendments that should be not just considered but enacted. I'm going to speak to those when I speak in around 30 minutes, at 7:30 p.m.

I've talked about these amendments that may be necessary here with police officers and with the folks down in my riding in Niagara Centre, and most recently last night when I was over at the seniors' dinner at Front 54 where all the seniors in Thorold, some 350 of them, have a Christmas dinner served by local councillors, and the mayor and I join in. They let me serve wine last

right. They were interested in this bill and interested in the discussion about it.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise as well to pledge full support for this piece of legislation. I think some of the finest moments in the short time, the last five years, I've been here in this Legislature have been when all three parties have found common ground on an issue we all can support and work together on.

We certainly pledge our support for it and also pledge our support for speedy passage of this piece of legislation. I truly think it's long overdue. I think it's important that this Legislature, united, send out a clear message to people across this province that we are interested in ensuring the safety and protection of our police officers and our citizens, and that people who decide they're going to lead police on chases understand that using that vehicle as a weapon will result in the same consequences as if they were using a gun or a knife as a weapon, and that's how it should be.

We urge this government to move very quickly. We will support you on this legislation. We also urge our federal colleagues in Ottawa to do their part and to very quickly bring in legislation at the federal level that will make this even tougher and more enforceable. There have been too many victims, too many police officers, too many innocent citizens who have lost their lives or been seriously injured or maimed as a result of irresponsible acts by someone behind the wheel who decides they're going to try to escape and flee from police officers chasing them.

That is unacceptable. They must understand that the consequences are clear. This legislature, Ontario, by bringing this forward this evening and hopefully very quickly putting it into the books as law, is going to send a clear example, a clear message to police officers, that on all sides of the House here we all support their safety and their well-being on the job, to ensure that all citizens in this province can feel a little safer, knowing this piece of legislation is there.

Hopefully, when individuals behind the wheel are making that split-second decision whether to flee police officers, they'll think for a split second what the consequences are and will not do it. I believe this will save lives, will help police officers and will help citizens. You have our full support to pass this as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for London-Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I just wanted to thank —

The Deputy Speaker: Maybe I wasn't clear. The member from London-Fanshawe has two minutes to respond.

Mr Mazzilli: I was represented by somebody else here for a moment. I'm pleased to hear that all three parties are in support of Bill 22. I think it will be a tribute to the family of Sergeant Rick McDonald. I know the member across, from Sudbury, spoke on the day the McDonald family was in the Legislature. He spoke of how when he was a police services board member he had

a fine young person who had just been hired by the Sudbury Police Service.

I can assure you that our government views police chases as a last resort. We are doing everything that is physically possible to prevent police pursuits, and in doing so, Premier Harris tasked me and the member from Cambridge to the crime commission and the first thing we were to look at was stolen vehicles in Ontario. We've been doing that since early July.

There is some excellent technology in the way of anti-theft devices that allow vehicles not to be hot-wired, and the reason that is so important for us is that we know that of the 60% to 65% of vehicles that are stolen that are recovered, the vast majority are stolen by young criminals who use them to go from point A to point B. And if the police attempt to be stop them in the process, they will flee and there will be a police pursuit. Our government is committed to preventing these automobile thefts and these pursuits.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Levac: I am pleased to speak to Bill 22, the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act, regarding criminal apprehension pursuits.

On a personal note, let me offer my heartfelt sympathy to the family of Sergeant McDonald and, indeed, to all the families of all members of the police services who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

We believe that honouring these fine men and women is not only appropriate but speaks to the appreciation and respect we have for all police service in this province. We wish to reinforce our commitment to the Solicitor General that the passage of this bill is as important to us as it is to the government of the day. We also want the Solicitor General to know how much we appreciate the directness of the bill, the language of the bill and the fact that no unrelated legislation is included to cause division in the House. We encourage the rest of the government to follow the fine example of the Solicitor General to present clear, direct legislation as a matter of regular course. We dedicate ourselves to quick passage of this bill. Again, there is no question that all members of this House are in favour of this bill, and quick passage is indeed very possible.

Contrary to attempts by some people to paint us as soft on crime, we believe that we need to provide the police with the tools and the support to keep our citizens safe and secure. Of course, a balanced approach to punishment for crimes committed and preventive measures is a more favoured approach by most civilized societies—the carrot and the stick, if you will.

Late last week I indicated to the Solicitor General that I would provide him with some food for thought. I look forward to working with him to provide the people of Ontario with the best possible police service available today and well into the future.

The bill being debated today is the stick, but only part of the stick. Fed-bashing is not the way to encourage action. Contrary to the image of an inactive federal government, the Solicitor General and most members

opposite really know full well that a private member's bill, C-18, by Toronto-area MP Dan McTeague has received unanimous, all-party support at committee level. Federal Justice Minister Anne McLellan has endorsed the bill, and it is believed that the bill will pass before Christmas.

Working together in a non-confrontational way does work and can achieve what is best for the citizens of Ontario and, indeed, the country. Don't be fooled. It does not mean, "Do what I want and I'll co-operate." What it does mean is, "Let's work together, share our ideas and come to what is best for public safety and for all of us."

To that end I dedicate myself to listen attentively to answers, to offer constructive criticism, to ask specific questions and, dare I say, to not heckle if I'm not tempted.

Mr McTeague's bill makes fleeing police in a vehicle a crime punishable by up to five years in jail. It also carries a maximum life sentence for causing death while fleeing police, and 14 years for causing injury. Let's send an all-party letter, written in a non-partisan, non-confrontational, invitational way to the federal government requesting fast passage of Bill C-18, to show it's what all Ontarians want.

What can be done to support and strengthen police services as we know them today to provide our citizens with the safety and security they need and deserve? This is the carrot end of the carrot and the stick.

What can we do? Let's provide every vehicle with the proper equipment to engage in or back up criminal apprehension pursuits. You have provided some funding. To date, it's not adequate for Ontario's police services.

Provide and fund adequate ministry-accredited training for police and civilian members. It is interesting here to note that no formal training for pursuits took place before 1982. The Ontario Police College needs practical and financial attention if it is to maintain its reputation as one of the best in the world.

1910

A commitment from this government to pass legislation to guard against privatization of our front-line police service: This means no private police service or force doing a trained police officer's job. Again I call on the Solicitor General to commit to tightening regulations and ensuring that the citizens of Ontario will be protected by properly trained police officers.

A commitment from the government to explore, provide and properly fund new technologies that will assist our police to do an even better job than today: Some examples are working with private industry and private business for anti-auto theft devices; satellite tracking devices; even lockout or stall devices. These, again, require tri-level co-operation, along with private industry, and I respectfully recommend reaching out in a manner that invites and is inclusive rather than accuses and blames.

We must ensure that our police officers are treated fairly in cases involving investigation of our front-line workers.

Commit to safe school zones, in which any drug or weapon offence results in stiff penalties.

Greater support for project P, fighting against child pornography.

Provisions preventing mental health patients from being discharged unless community help is available.

Support gun registration.

Photo radar is a tool that can assist our police. Direct any funds that have accumulated from fines from the photo radar to either hire more police officers or improve highway and road safety.

Support a private member's bill, presently on by the member from Sudbury, to protect teenagers from the evils of prostitution.

I've only touched on a few of those ideas. As I said earlier, I want to work with the Solicitor General and his PA to provide for our police service in our communities the best possible opportunities to make our province safe and secure.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm proud to be able to speak for a few moments to this bill. I hope that I would add maybe a bit of a human aspect to this bill entitled the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act.

As members in the House know, I was a member of the police service in Sudbury when Rick McDonald came and applied to the force and we hired him. I must tell you, ladies and gentlemen who are in the House and people who are listening across Ontario, we were looking at a huge, tall man. His heart was as big as he was in size. He combined those important elements of a human being to his policing. He was kind, he was fair, he was just and he was compassionate. He cared deeply about not only the service but about the people he served and protected. He did that in his many years with our force.

He rose to the rank of sergeant and was president of the police association in Sudbury. We worked very closely together. In fact, when you talk about proactive community policing, you're talking about Sergeant Rick McDonald. I think Rick is probably looking down on us and he's pretty happy because the Solicitor General was in Sudbury last weekend looking at our facility and hoping that someday soon he'll be able to say that the northern academy of policing will be announced for the Sudbury site. I don't want to pre-empt the Solicitor General, because that's not my role, but certainly that's the hope and the aspiration of the Sudbury Regional Police Service. Certainly it's the vision and the dream of Chief Alex McCauley and Deputy Chief Jim Cunningham. There is no doubt that Sergeant Rick McDonald worked hard to make sure that the northern academy of policing would become a reality in northern Ontario so that those northerners wouldn't have to travel south in order to garner the skills that are so necessary to serve and to protect. We look and we hope with a great deal of fervour that the Solicitor General will soon be able to announce that Sudbury will be the site of the northern academy of policing.

I'm a bit dismayed this evening that we're even debating this bill. I believe, my caucus believes, there's

absolutely no question this bill should be passed already. I don't believe there's a need for public hearings; my caucus doesn't believe there's a need for public hearings. This is, as our critic said, a very straightforward bill. We shouldn't be debating the merits of this bill tonight; we should be rejoicing in its passing. I only hope that we get unanimous consent to be able to do that very quickly.

I say that for a variety of reasons and probably one of the biggest reasons is that Rick had a very close, loving, caring family; a family that is watching these proceedings very carefully. Rick's parents would love to see this enacted in law as quickly as possible. His wife, Corinne, who is dedicated to policing in Sudbury, who has attained the rank of sergeant already, is a committed member of our police services, works very hard with the community and in the community to ensure that our community is a stronger, safer, more secure place because of very proactive community policing.

Ladies and gentlemen in the House this evening, there is absolutely no reason why this bill cannot achieve complete passage tonight. This bill does not have to go to committee. This is a straightforward bill. There's an opportunity here to show our police forces across Ontario, to show the people they serve and protect, to show the family of Sergeant Rick McDonald, that we're serious, that we want quick passage of this bill, that we want to ensure that our police are protected, that they have the tools, that the people they're mandated to serve and protect have the safeguards in place.

I urge this House to have quick passage of this bill, not only in memory of Sergeant Rick McDonald, whom I considered to be a very good friend, but because it is the right thing to do, because there are people, there are families who need closure to this tragic episode that can best happen if quick passage takes place. I urge this House to act expeditiously.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm going to take just a couple of minutes to add along with some of my colleagues some comments to this particular bill because all of us had a chance very recently to meet with members of our police forces. We know from meeting with them over the years that one of the problems they face, one of the challenges they have faced, is the challenge of whether to undertake a police chase and, in doing so, when the police chase might end. We don't have people in our police forces who are looking for police chases. It's the last thing they want, because there are several people whose lives are placed in danger: First of all the police officers themselves, and they are engaging in a chase with somebody who is fleeing from a law enforcement officer, so they are not people who are going to want to undertake a police chase unless it's necessary. Most of the time you'll find that they're going to enlist some assistance from other police officers with other vehicles and use every method possible to apprehend the person without a dangerous chase.

It's important that the people who are knowingly fleeing the police, particularly from vicious, serious

crimes, that those individuals be aware that the penalty is very strong indeed.

1920

Yes, some, and I suspect many, people, when they see a light on with a police cruiser, are inclined to pull over to determine what the problem is, to comply with the request of the police officer. Those who feel that they are in severe jeopardy because of a crime they have committed are those who are more likely to flee the police. When they see the penalties that are now to be available, this is going to act as a disincentive for at least some of those individuals to undertake fleeing from a police officer, particularly as we relate to vehicles being involved.

One of the other things the officers said to us, particularly those who perhaps have been part of a police force for years, was that they would like to see as much training as possible for police officers in a police chase. It's not an easy thing to do, racing through traffic, having to violate what are normal rules of the road. It requires some intricate training that police officers who have not already had the training would seek to have. I would encourage the government to undertake a more extensive program, one which would involve those who have not yet had that opportunity to be involved in extensive police chases, in terms of the training that is involved.

We've heard a little discussion of restructuring from time to time. I want to say to members, in the Niagara region something that makes sense is having a police force which is region-wide. I can think of nothing else that makes sense, but that does make sense. I think police officers understand that when we're talking about restructuring. We already have in Niagara a police force which is region-wide.

I think we recognize as well that police officers have a very tough job. Many of us have personal friends who have joined the police department over the years. They are people we grew up with. I'm not one who believes in nepotism, so I didn't get anybody a job in the police force, but I can tell you that we know them. They're our neighbours, they're our friends. I can't think of any relatives I have, but some people in the House may have relatives who are police officers. Every day when they go out on to the highway, every day when they go out on to the streets, every day when they go out on to the beat, their lives are potentially on the line.

What I would add to this bill or some future bill would be a further allocation of police officers on the front line, in our streets. One of the things they will tell us, as well, is that if we had more officers to deal with the problems that are facing them, sometimes the chances of a police chase taking place would be significantly reduced. So I hope the government will embark upon a program. Not many of them are at this point in time convinced that it's going to be a reality, the program that has been announced, that there are going to be 1,000, I think you said, net new police officers. Last I counted, there are fewer police officers now than when the NDP was in power, and you used to be very critical of the New Democratic Party at that time.

I do want to join my colleagues in the Liberal caucus in expressing my support for the bill. The sooner it is passed by this Legislature, the better it is. Very often we in the opposition are people who believe that bills require more consideration, more debate and public hearings. This seems to be the kind of bill that lends itself to quick passage. There's a relative consensus in this House as to the advisability of having such a bill. I can't think what would be added to it by extensive public hearings, in this case. I think police officers themselves, the Solicitor General himself, all people of goodwill would want to see the provisions of this act implemented as soon as possible. For that reason, I add my very strong and vehement support to this piece of legislation.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) : C'est avec plaisir que je prends part au débat de ce projet de loi 22, Loi commémorant le sergent Rick McDonald et modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les poursuites en vue d'appréhender des suspects.

Lorsque nous regardons les statistiques, ce sont des statistiques, vraiment, qui donnent un message au gouvernement qu'on doit mettre en place une loi immédiatement afin d'arrêter ces poursuites, surtout dans le secteur résidentiel. Sur les 10 421 poursuites qui sont survenues depuis 1991, 27,7 % ont été à l'intérieur d'un secteur résidentiel.

J'ai vécu une expérience. Même si les statistiques ne font référence qu'à depuis 1991, je peux vous dire que j'ai vécu toute une expérience en 1989 lorsque mon neveu était dans la cour avec moi puis il m'a dit, tout d'un coup, « Je vais aller faire une randonnée dans la ville de Rockland. » Il est parti une journée après que son père lui avait acheté une auto pour se rendre aux études à l'Université d'Ottawa et puis la personne, complètement innocente, a été frappée par une auto qui était poursuivie par la Sûreté provinciale de l'Ontario.

Aujourd'hui, avec cette loi, j'espère bien que le gouvernement va l'appliquer selon la loi que nous déposons aujourd'hui et que nous débattons. Je peux vous dire que dans le passé, le gouvernement, à plusieurs reprises, a mis des projets de loi de l'avant mais ne les a pas appliqués parce que cela entraîne d'autres changements du bureau du procureur général. Dans ce cas-ci, j'espère que les changements ont été apportés au niveau du procureur général en même temps.

Lorsque je regarde les contraventions qui seront impliquées dans ces poursuites, nous parlons d'amendes allant de 5 000 \$ à 25 000 \$ et aussi de suspensions pouvant aller jusqu'à 10 ans, et même suspension à la vie de conduire. C'est bien beau de parler de ces projets de loi et de dire que nous, le gouvernement, voulons mettre en place des restrictions ou des pénalités plus sévères, mais il s'agit d'apporter tous les changements nécessaires.

Les statistiques démontrent que nous avons eu 10 421 poursuites depuis 1991, dont 27,7 % dans le secteur résidentiel. Cela a définitivement encouru beaucoup de dépenses et aussi de dommages matériels. Je me

demande jusqu'à quel point, à ce moment-ci, lorsque nous voyons que 71,5 % mettait en cause des conducteurs de 25 ans et moins, mais lorsque je regarde les autres statistiques, on dit que les poursuites de personnes de 18 à 25 ans, ce sont les poursuites que nous voyons le plus souvent.

Est-ce nécessaire de poursuivre une auto dans un secteur résidentiel ? La journée où mon neveu est décédé à l'occasion d'une poursuite policière dans la ville de Rockland, je pourrais dire que c'est mon neveu qui a été frappé, mais environ une minute avant cet accident, on aurait pu frapper une mère avec ses deux enfants qu'on a manqués de justesse.

Aujourd'hui, nous allons définitivement supporter un projet de loi de la sorte parce que je crois qu'il est très nécessaire pour le gouvernement de mettre en place un projet de loi qui va protéger soit nos piétons ou nos automobilistes qui font des randonnées. Comme on voit, depuis 1991, nous avons connu 33 décès, 33 personnes qui ont été tuées pendant ou après une poursuite policière, dont six qui étaient des personnes très innocentes, tuées par suite d'une collision avec un véhicule conduit par un suspect qui tentait d'éviter d'être pris ou impliquant un tel véhicule. Nous avons eu un agent de police, comme nous le savons tous, qui a été tué à Sudbury. Encore là, est-ce vraiment nécessaire de continuer à faire des poursuites à l'intérieur des limites d'une municipalité, des limites résidentielles ?

Si nous regardons les statistiques au complet, nous voyons que même dans le secteur commercial et le secteur rural—nous savons que souvent ces poursuites se poursuivent dans les secteurs ruraux. Même si ce n'est pas dans un secteur résidentiel, c'est toujours très, très dangereux, et souvent la personne qui est au volant de l'auto peut être innocente aussi, même s'il essaie de s'éloigner d'une poursuite policière. C'est que nous sommes pris par surprise et puis la personne essaie de s'en sauver afin que ses parents ne soient pas mis au courant.

Mais je crois que ce n'est pas nécessaire la majorité du temps. Sur les 10 421 poursuites que je vois dans les statistiques depuis 1991—

1930

M. Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex) : Êtes-vous en faveur ?

M. Lalonde : Oui, je suis en faveur, au membre, mais je veux dire que nous devons nous assurer à ce que le gouvernement actuel applique le projet de loi 22 à la lettre. Si nous regardons dans les rapports que nous connaissons actuellement, lorsqu'on passe à un livret sommaire—actuellement les personnes ont dit que la loi dit que les permis de conduire sont suspendus pour un minimum de 10 ans—les personnes sont encore sur la route. La loi n'est pas assez forte ou bien nous avons toujours un moyen de nous en sortir. Mais aujourd'hui, j'espère que le gouvernement va se tenir debout encore une fois. Je le dis à plusieurs reprises parce que dans le passé, c'est quelque chose qu'on essayait de passer afin

de bien paraître au point de vue du public, mais nous ne mettons pas ces projets de loi en place.

Donc, je peux vous dire que oui, nous allons définitivement voter en faveur de ce projet de loi, et j'espère que le gouvernement va mettre en pratique le projet de loi 22 afin d'assurer la sécurité de nos citoyens et citoyennes de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: I just wanted to remind the members that I need to know who you are splitting your time with when you start.

Comments and questions?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Of course, our party has already indicated that we support this bill. We did that on the same day that the government introduced the bill, when we had an opportunity to speak after the comments were made by the minister.

The critic for justice for our party will speak tonight about the bill, and he will do so at some length.

Where I disagree with my colleagues from the Liberal Party is that they want the bill done as quickly as possible, without any public hearings. Before they get too far down the road or get into too much of a tizzy here tonight about the fact that we have asked for some public hearings, the fact is, we think there can be some changes to the bill that will make it better, that will increase the fines that appear here. In fact, I should tell my colleagues in the Liberal Party, who seem to be getting into quite a lather here about the fact that this might go to committee, that my colleague has taken an opportunity to talk to the police associations about one of the amendments in particular that we would like to move, and they are very interested in what he has to say and I suspect would support it. But the only way that amendment can be moved and can be dealt with is in committee. So we will have to have—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Committee of the whole.

Ms Martel: Well, committee of the whole doesn't happen around here anymore, as a result of megacity. So we won't even talk about committee of the whole, because we know what happened when we did that. So it will have to go to a committee. I understand there have been some discussions already, as a matter of fact, about it going to committee, and a first indication of some agreement around that.

So I think the bill can be strengthened. I am quite sure the amendment that my colleague will talk about will be supported not only by the other two parties but by the police associations, and I would encourage us to have the debate tonight and let this go to committee so that we can make what is a good bill even better.

Mr Mazzilli: Just to comment on what we have heard, the intent of this bill, and I'm getting the co-operation from the Liberal Party, is strictly penalties, penalties for those who have offended. As I've said before, the penalties are either a 10-year licence suspension or life in the case of death or serious injury, and doubling of the fines.

So any amendments that the NDP propose—and I can only suspect what they are going to be. I suspect they will be training issues. I can tell you that that is being done across the province, so this bill is not intended to deal with training; it is intended to deal with suspensions. I believe the Liberal Party understands that and that is why they're supporting it. The NDP in this case certainly makes their training issues known to the ministry. The ministry has been working hard for several years to change training; and with the development of new technology, training changes.

Again, our government, with the co-operation of the opposition party, is targeting the criminals who are fleeing from police.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It is a pleasure that I speak in support, of course, of this bill. I have to say that it is important that we pass bills such as this, and as quickly as we can, because I believe it's important that we ensure that we safeguard the people who put their lives at risk every day when they go to work.

This bill is going to increase fines. It's also going to give maximum penalties to the drivers who wilfully continue to avoid police when being pursued, stronger penalties for people who wilfully endanger the lives of the police officers. These police officers are making our communities safer in their line of duty. There have to be stiffer consequences for those who wilfully continue to avoid police being pursued. We know that the actions of individuals who flee from police endanger their own lives, the lives of the police and the lives of others. I know that often stiffer penalties can be a deterrent, and that's what we hope this bill will do.

I support this bill wholeheartedly and, as I said, I think it is wonderful to see that the whole House is in favour of safeguarding the lives of those people who every day go out there and put their lives at risk for us. Again, I hope this bill has quick passage and we don't have to take the time to go to extra hearings.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments? The member for Brant has two minutes to respond.

Mr Levac: In response to the discussion that's taken place to this point, I want to bring it down to the bill itself. We want to make sure that we don't get too far ahead of ourselves. The compliment that I paid the government was the fact that this legislation was very poignant. It was to the point. It made very obvious references to what the fines and the penalties are going to be. That's what the police want, that's what the public wants and that's what we want. I'm not hearing anything different.

What we're going to try to do now is add to the bill or change and modify it, and I would tell you that it's not the appropriate thing to do with this bill. We want to get quick passage. We want to get this out there and into the hands of the people who secure our community. My suggestion very strongly is that we can get this done today, no problem. If we get all-party co-operation, it can get done.

I also want to say that in my research and in my discussions with the police officers and all the different associations and the chiefs of police, I was taught that as little as 60 seconds is involved in a police chase. With such little time in terms of how a police officer responds, we need training. I'm going to suggest respectfully to the government that its training process right now is still not adequate enough. We still need to move on to it. We also know that more legislation can be provided by the government, and I think it would address the NDP's concern that there are things that need to get added to this in order to make a comprehensive set of rules out there.

If we can get ourselves fixed on this particular piece of legislation first, we can get this thing passed tonight and then we can move on to some serious discussion about what I've been talking about and suggesting to the government: that we investigate its training, that we investigate all of the other avenues that I mentioned earlier, and say to the government and to the NDP collectively, along with the federal government, we can make a safe and secure Ontario for everyone.

1940

Mr Kormos: I appreciate the chance to speak to this bill. Shelley Martel, of course, represents all those wonderful small communities around Sudbury, places like Hanmer and Capreol and Lively, which won't exist much longer. To be fair, Shelley Martel very much wanted me to make sure that she knew when this bill was being debated because of her strong interest in it and her appreciation of the incredible sacrifice of Rick McDonald of the Sudbury police force.

Let me also tell the government and the parliamentary assistant that I appreciate what the ministry has done, because promptly after the bill was presented for first reading, I got a call from Bill Campbell from the minister's office. He had provided me with the compendium and the various briefing notes. I had a rather considerable conversation with Bill. He was speaking on behalf of the minister. I then raised with Bill my concern about getting this bill on promptly for second reading, and I raised with him my concern about elements that weren't in the bill that should be there by virtue of amendment. I'm very concerned in this respect.

Let's just talk about the issue for a minute. I have to tell you, I do not have the data that I'm sure is available. Let me tell you this, Parliamentary Assistant: I'm proposing that this bill go for hearings at the justice committee on Monday and Tuesday of next week, the 13th and 14th, so it will be available for third reading before the end of next week. Let me tell you why. I think it's important that this bill be passed before Christmas because of the very nature of things that tend to happen out on our roadways and highways come Christmastime.

When I mention data, I'm hoping the ministry will have these data available. I've simply relied on my own exposure to this from some years ago now—I spoke with several police officers—in terms of getting a handle or an idea of who these drivers are that the police are compelled to pursue. Who are we talking about here?

The information from police officers—I appreciate it's anecdotal but I suspect it matches the data pretty closely—is that the biggest chunk are drunk drivers and suspended drivers. That's the single biggest chunk of drivers who lead police on high-speed chases.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Hold on. So you have drunks and suspended drivers. The second group, when you move down in terms of volume, are people driving stolen cars. all them joyriders, car thieves, what have you. That is the second-largest, but by far the biggest group of offenders that police find themselves in high-speed pursuit of are the drunk and suspended drivers, and more so the drunks because with the distortion of perception they're simply unable to appreciate what's going on.

Then you've got the class of people who are car thieves and joyriders. At the end of the day the smallest number—not to say that they're any more or any less dangerous, and they're a very small number in the total scheme of things—are the literal bank robbers, leaving the scene of a bank robbery. The reason I mention those is let's look at what the largest single group tends to be, and I suspect the data will confirm this: What cops have been telling me and what my observations have led me to believe is that you're talking about drunks and suspended drivers as the largest single group of people. I hope the parliamentary assistant would take this as seriously as we have over here.

In terms of the increased fines, fine. In terms of the jail penalties, once again, fine. All of us who have been here, some of us for a considerable period of time, have gone through a regrettable history of high-speed-chase incidents, and inevitably the second-guessing, the arm-chair quarterbacking that people try to do.

I, for one, find it very difficult to try to second-guess a cop or cops who are out there, upon whom we impose incredibly high expectations. We have incredibly high demands of our police officers, who are called upon to exercise judgment in the matter of not seconds but milliseconds, fractions of a second, and who more often than not find themselves in a scenario of being damned if they do and damned if they don't.

This goes to what the PA talked about in terms of developing policies. I appreciate the policies, and if and when policies are developed, I tell you, it's got to be with the primary consultation being with cops themselves—no disrespect to their chiefs, but not with chiefs of police or public relations officers from police services boards—cops who are out there on a daily basis, the women and men who are out there and are called upon to make those judgments within the context of those guidelines, whatever they will be. I look forward to seeing those proposed guidelines and listening to what cops have to say about them, bouncing them off and reflecting them, based on their own daily real-life experience out there.

With respect to this particular legislation—I mentioned this before. I mentioned it to a group of seniors last night who were having the Thorold seniors' dinner at Front 54. I told them it was going to be debated this

evening. These folks in Thorold said, "We'll tune in because that's something we're interested in." So people are watching out there, watching this government's progress with this bill and, I suspect, similar types of legislation.

The comments of the parliamentary assistant himself about the need for training are a given, aren't they? The parliamentary assistant acknowledges that there are inadequate resources out there to ensure that police officers are properly trained. Where I come from, this means yes, Parliamentary Assistant. When you move your head up and down, it means yes.

Mind you, the police college at Aylmer only instituted or initiated its high-speed-chase training in 1982. That's almost 20 years old now, just three years shy of 20 years old. The problem is, how many police officers are getting to that training? That's the problem: How many police officers are getting to that training? That's number one.

Number two, you talked about using spike belts. I've told you what police officers in Niagara have told me. I'm telling you what they tell me. One pulled me over, opened the trunk of his car, showed me this neat Velcro classy package—the spike belt is up on the roof of the trunk—looked at it and said: "I don't even know how to remove the thing. Everybody's got the spike belts now, good so far, but I haven't received any training in the use of it." He was frustrated.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: One of our colleagues says it's not that complicated. Please. Look at what happened to Rick McDonald. He wasn't in a car chasing a culprit in a high-speed chase, where police officers know they're exposing themselves to some significant risk. He was using the new technology. That's what makes his death all the more tragic; it really is. When a police officer is in a car pursuing somebody, they know they're putting themselves at risk and, yes, they know there's an element of risk to bystanders who may appear unexpectedly. No cop purposely enters a high-speed chase thinking they're going to injure somebody—themselves or the culprit or the public. Come on.

1950

I don't trivialize the lack of training when it comes to even using spike belts. There's a difference between a video, where you're recreating a street scenario, and being out there. And it's expensive training. It doesn't take place in 45 minutes. It involves the use of vehicles, resources and training officers, and it can take several days out of a police officer's week. The police officer will be paid, of course, but won't be available for duty in his or her detachment. It costs money, and even more so because you can't just say, OK, you've done it, and that's all you're going to do for the next 25 or 30 years that you are a police officer. That sort of training has to be ongoing. As we develop or acquire new technologies that assist our police in stopping fleeing vehicles, we have to train them in that too.

All of us here have gone through one form of training or another. But at the end of the day, the real test was

when we are out there in the real world applying in a real-life experience.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Please, Parliamentary Assistant.

There is a crying need for this government to assure police and the public of Ontario that our cops are not only going to get the best when it comes to resources and tools and the newest technology, but that they're going to get the training to use them effectively and safely.

That doesn't detract from this bill even in the slightest way. But I note that the bill increases the monetary penalties, and indeed imposes jail sentences in cases where there is bodily harm or death. That doesn't mean by any stretch that we should vote against the bill. Those are inevitably cases where the Criminal Code sections on negligent driving are going to apply in any event, where the Criminal Code is going to be utilized.

When you have the provincial statute and the Criminal Code overlapping, one would hope that a prosecutor would be using the Criminal Code, among other things because of its stigma as a criminal conviction as compared to a provincial offence conviction which appears on your Highway Traffic Act record for five years and then automatically disappears. If I have my druthers, I'd rather see criminals prosecuted under the Criminal Code, and I think they should be, so there is a criminal record that is long-standing and hopefully so that appropriate penalties can be imposed.

On higher fines, we have a huge outstanding accounts receivable of fines in this province. With respect, these fines aren't going to be paid. We've seen the evidence of that. The auditor's report from last year indicated an incredible volume, millions of dollars of uncollected fines. That's not to say that fines shouldn't be a part of this bill. For many offenders, fines will act as some modest deterrent.

Let's talk about real deterrents. I talked about these at length with Bill Campbell from the minister's office, when he was courteous enough to call me. I asked him to please urge the minister, urge the government, to adopt as part of its bill the amendments I am going to speak to right now. At the end of the day there may be sufficient disagreement with my proposals that they warrant moving on from them, but I suspect to the contrary.

You know that I was disappointed—a whole lot of us were—in the latest red tape bill. The Minister of Transportation spoke with me after we raised the question on the amendments to the red tape bill. His explanation for those amendments was as I expected. They dealt with impoundment provisions for driving under a suspension that flows from a Criminal Code conviction. The most frequent would be drunk driving over .80, dangerous driving, criminal negligence etc. I appreciate that the minister was very candid with me, and his response was what I anticipated. But that bill went to committee after having second reading here today. And because of time allocation and because the House sat late into the day before question period ended, there wasn't a minute of questions or discussion, especially about the

part that dealt with the regulatory power of the government to exempt certain persons or vehicles from periods of impoundment—45, 90 or 180 days respectively. I don't blame the minister for that. I just say it's very regrettable.

If I don't recite the exchange accurately, Minister, please jump up and say so. You explained that one consideration here was rental cars: Avis, Hertz, whatever the rental company happens to be. My response to you was to let rental companies be aware that if they rent a car to a suspended driver, they risk having their car impounded for 45, 90 or 180 days. They should be called upon to exercise some due diligence before renting a vehicle. Because I know how it is done; I know the scam of how suspended drivers get rental cars.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Corporate fleets.

Mr Kormos: Now the minister is talking about fleets or lease cars. Well, impoundment once again. Rather than dipping into the well and trying to divide things and split things up, I say, too bad, so sad. Let those lessors collect their damages from the suspended driver who caused them to have their car impounded for 45 or 90 days in the same way they would go after the lessee if that person smashed up the car or left cigarette burns all over the interior.

I know what you're talking about, Minister, but it causes me some concern. We impose a stiff standard, the impoundment, and now we're talking about ways—and I know where you're coming from. The sad thing also is that we didn't have a chance to talk about it. But you didn't make that decision, and I understand that.

The reason I raise that is that I realize we supported the impoundment provisions—not a shabby deterrent. The fact is, suspended drivers drive because they don't think they're going to get caught, and if they do get caught they're going to get—the fines have gone up recently—another six-month suspension. But get the car impounded with the associated fees, because you don't get the car back until you pay those fees, and the price of poker goes up. Mom or dad will think twice before lending the family car to a child who has a suspended license, or the message will get out.

I have had couples come to my office, and my advice to couples who have two cars and one of the spouses has been convicted of drunk driving is, put one car in your name and don't let that person drive it. That's one modest area where if you really lay down the law with the insurance companies—they won't do it automatically, but you've got the whole excluded driver business—the innocent partner in the marriage isn't punished or put at risk because of vicarious liability by a drunk-driving spouse.

2000

I have no sympathy for that scenario, or a friend. I accept that I should be responsible for ensuring that I don't lend my vehicle to somebody whose driver's license is suspended because they're a drunk driver, and if my vehicle gets impounded under those circumstances,

once again, too bad so sad. The message had better get out there that you'd better use more caution and exercise better discretion about who you rent your car to, or lend your car to, or—there, I've said it, who you rent your car to. I think that's an important thing to consider. Just wait and see all those regulations start flowing down.

That takes me back to this bill, Bill 22, because I consider the impoundment provisions to raise the stakes for the offender. I raised this with Bill Campbell from the minister's office a week and a half ago. I'm not suggesting that impoundment provisions should be contained in this bill and I'll tell you why. I'm suggesting that confiscation provisions should be contained in this bill because an impoundment for a scenario as heinous and dangerous as this—45, 90, 180 days—in the total scheme of things you'll wait out your time. I'm talking—and I've already asked legislative counsel to draft up the amendments—about confiscating the car of somebody who engages in high-speed chases. If it's their own car, confiscate it. If it is their mom or dad's car, confiscate it. If it is their spouse's car, confiscate it. Because the message has got to go out there.

That's why I started with who does this offence. The biggest single group is drunk or suspended drivers because they try to escape the police, perhaps on just routine pullovers or RIDE checks, that sort of thing; it's the biggest single chunk. Now, please, I'm not suggesting that it be applied to the owners of stolen vehicles; that would be ludicrous.

But you've raised the bar, you've done it in a fundamental way. What you've done is you have not only told the offender that you're playing with stiff fines. Look, with scofflaws stiff fines aren't—I mean, if \$1,000 didn't work, why will \$10,000 in the total scheme of things? Jail sentences? Now you're starting to hit closer to home. But if you lose a \$20,000, \$30,000 or \$40,000 vehicle, it goes off to the pound—go buy it back at the police auction. See if you can outbid the other bidders.

I raise this because I think that starts it again. I respect and support the intent of the bill but why are we monkeying around? If you're going to go with tough penalties, let's do it, let's drive her home, because this also deals with the Kineapple situation, an appellate decision. When you've got two statutes that basically do the same thing, you pick one or the other. But if one has a substantially different goal—let the lawyers argue this—then Kineapple is less likely to apply. We'll drop the HTA charge for fleeing a driver and stick with the federal Criminal Code conviction, because I agree, if the federal amendments, whenever they do get passed, are as tough or tougher than these, by all means use the federal Criminal Code. If it has merely fine and imprisonment as penalties, it substantially then does the very same thing that the HTA does, which means that you've got to pick one or the other. My respectful submission to you is that if the HTA moves itself into a spotlight or an arena of its own—and I'm suggesting that confiscating the car can do that—you prosecute both of them. You prosecute the Criminal Code offence to whack the driver and you pro-

secute the Highway Traffic Act failing-to-stop offence to seize the car, to hit the owner.

Interjections.

Mr Kormos: You're darned right. I advised the ministry that I had concerns. I asked why wasn't it there. I don't know what the process was, because the police association of Ontario has indicated through some of its spokespeople that they very much want confiscation of vehicles as part of the penalty provisions here, Parliamentary Assistant. I want a chance for them to make that submission to a committee and to move—and look, if you want to move the amendment first, please, by all means. I'll share with you as soon as I get it from legislative counsel—because I've asked for two versions of the confiscation amendment. You could either go sort of *prima facie* confiscated, subject to a court order, and that would be in the case of a stolen vehicle, where you would count on a judge automatically to say "No confiscation," or some remarkable plea by the owner of the vehicle who was not the offender that would persuade a judge to not impose it. So you've got "presumed to be confiscated," subject to whatever argument you can make. In the case of stolen vehicle, the argument's automatic. In the case of a grey area, let them make their case. Or simply amend the penalty sections to say, "And in addition, the judge may order the car or vehicle confiscated."

I prefer the "presumed confiscated," because you know what's going to happen. It's going to get caught up in the real but sometimes very regrettable process of plea bargaining, where a prosecutor will agree not to request confiscation of the vehicle. It'll result in all sorts of inequities across the province, where one jurisdiction may deal with it one way just because of a judge's inclination or a group of judges' inclination, and in another jurisdiction, another way.

The law is pointed. It's straightforward. It deals with a very singular issue. It isn't a complex one; it's not a hard one. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out when you're breaking this law. It doesn't involve the intricacies of very complex offences. It's straightforward. If you take the cops off on a high-speed chase, you're done like dinner. As simple as that. The cops deserve it; our communities deserve it.

Does confiscation as part of the penalty provisions raise the price of poker? Of course it does. But what price? More dead cops, more injured cops, more dead, innocent passersby or more injured pedestrians. We've got to deal with this. This Legislature has been flirting with this issue, trying to accommodate it, for the 11 years that I've been here, and it certainly predates me.

Work on the guidelines; get them rolling. Please, take us seriously when we talk about training and new technology. When we talk, as we did upon our response to the ministerial announcement of this bill—I talked then about the helicopter for the Toronto Police Services Board. I believe the cops when they tell me that a helicopter is a useful tool. Quite frankly, let's get one into Toronto, because the location of Toronto, with the

whole huge development, Durham and so on up along the lake, all the way down through Burlington, Hamilton and Niagara region, means that helicopter will be available for basically all those police services as well.

Once again, is it the be-all and end-all? Of course not. I don't know what the police would have in mind. Do you keep it in the air literally 24 hours a day, or do you let it sit on a pad and only utilize it when it's called upon? I don't know what the answer to that is. Let's find out.

But I believe the cops when they tell us that helicopters—a helicopter in Toronto, for starters—can be an effective tool in police work. It certainly can be utilized in high-speed chases. Most of them are very brief. They end in hopefully a mere arrest, but more often than not in a collision of some sort or another.

So please, Parliamentary Assistant, you've got two minutes to respond to me. Tell us that you're going to push the idea of accommodating Toronto's cops, plus the surrounding police forces, with support. Is it expensive? Of course it's expensive. Of course it is. But you know, we're sending our cops out there with far fewer tools than the criminals have more often than not. The criminals have more resources available to them than our cops do, and then we tell our cops, "Go shut down the bad guys."

2010

You've got drug traffickers who are wealthy and have access to huge financial resources that make drug trafficking still the plague of virtually every community in this province. Down in Niagara, because we're a border community, we have to bear more than our share of the tragedy foisted upon communities by illegal, illicit drug trafficking. I don't have to tell you that you can take the biggest chunk of those daily crimes, the break-and-enters, the armed robberies of the corner store—not the bank jobs, but more often than not the armed robberies of the corner store or the gas bar, the snatching of purses—and more often than not you're talking about druggies pulling that off to finance and support their drug habit. We've got drug traffickers—I'm not talking about the punks on the street; I'm talking about what are inevitably very wealthy, well-resourced individuals and groups of individuals—who have more resources than the cops do.

Parliamentary Assistant, you know that. You know what drug investigation takes. It takes a lot of surveillance work. Incredibly labour-intensive, isn't it? It's expensive. How many times has a major drug investigation in any number of our communities been interrupted because the project simply ran out of money or you've got the hiatus of two or three days, the gap in the surveillance which throws the whole investigation out the window because you lose that link? You know what I'm talking about. I know you do.

I know the cops who do these things, and I know they're committed to dealing with these issues. They're more frustrated than anybody could be when they start a drug investigation project that they know is going to have results but they're told, "You're budgeted out of the

investigation." It happens, doesn't it? You bet your boots it happens, Parliamentary Assistant. They're budgeted out of the investigation, and another drug trafficking ring flourishes.

Gosh, we had a community policing sergeant here from the Toronto police force the other day who talked about some areas here in the city where drug traffickers are like cockroaches. It was an interesting—well, call William Burroughs. We need him now more than ever. He referred to them as cockroaches, a double entendre if there ever was one, because he talked about how you can scoop these street traffickers and the next day they're replaced not just by one but by two. You scoop those two and then there are four. But you see, the problem is you're dealing there with the addicts and the punks out on the street. You're not dealing with the kingpins. Why not? You're not dealing with some very well-resourced, wealthy, powerful individuals and organizations where you've got to do the real busts, and that's where cops need the tools. They can't be out-gunned in every sense of the word by the criminals, or else you create or impose upon them Sisyphean standards; you impose upon them the drudgery of doing their best but realizing that it's never going to result in any delivery. I mean, you put them like in a cage and they're constantly turning in that circle, expending incredible amounts of energy, costing no less money, but without the results.

I read the press reports of the Minister of Correctional Services and the Attorney General not being given standing at the federal committee that's reviewing the proposed—I don't know what the new name is. Let's call it what it is: the new YO act. I talked to the Solicitor General about it, even though it didn't appear he was one of the two—it was the minister of corrections and the Attorney General, fair enough, that sought standing—and I said, how do you guys like it now? Well, think about it. In my view it was entirely inappropriate to exclude a provincial Attorney General from the discussion about the YO act. Provinces have to administer it. They've got to provide the correctional facilities. I thought it incredibly inappropriate to exclude those two ministers. It was appropriate that it was the minister of corrections and the Attorney General.

But, you see, that's what happens here at Queen's Park when closure motions are used to impose incredibly compact periods of time on committees, so that when people phone saying, "I represent a major group that has an interest in this legislation," they say, "Sorry, no more room." Maybe it was just a Christmas thing, maybe there was simply no room at the inn, maybe there was a parable there. I wasn't pleased to see the province's Attorney General excluded from that, but I also said, aha, please, maybe this will be an object lesson. You understand now what it means to have the door slammed in your face.

I think the Attorney General and the minister of corrections had important things to tell the feds. I believe that and I wanted to hear what they had to say to the feds as well. The door was slammed in their face. Unfort-

unately there was some bizarre justice contained in that, because here at Queen's Park the door is being slammed in people's faces when they try to get to committees to make some presentations; quite frankly, more often than not.

It was interesting. At the very beginning of last week I got a phone call—as a matter of fact, Ms Martel got a phone call first—from some police officers' association, saying, "We've heard that the NDP are stalling this bill." I thought that was interesting. So I phoned them up and explained to them that I was here in this Legislature waiting and ready and prepared to speak to this bill every single day of last week and every single evening. And Ms Martel was here as well.

We were anxious to see this bill brought forward for second reading last week, and I prevailed upon the parliamentary assistant—what day was it, PA? Was it Thursday or Wednesday? Which day? It was either Wednesday or Thursday, wasn't it—that's right—that I spoke with you and said, "Please, use your influence to get this bill called, because it is important to get it passed before the Christmas break." And why? Let me go back to where I was there.

Understanding who fleeing drivers are: Drunks and suspended drivers are the two biggest single groups. Please, don't you know about the ways and means act, PA? Come on. Don't you know about the missing tail-light or the weaving across the centre line so you turn the cherries on to try to pull them over, and then they take off like a bat out of hell because they're under suspension and they don't want to be caught driving under suspension? So don't tell me that police don't have to pursue suspended drivers. The police want to pull a vehicle over—they've got a right to pull you over to check your insurance and your driver's license—and the car doesn't pull over; it takes off. It's either a drunk or a driver under suspension.

2020

The problem is, the data should be there. I'm looking forward to having that data before the end of the week, because I think you've got access to it and can put it together very quickly. That will be helpful to us in persuading us not just to increase fines but to have substantial penalties here where it's not a fine that never gets paid, because fines go unpaid, but once a car is confiscated, you've been dealt with. Right? At the end of the day there is still going to be the incredibly stupid person and again pure scofflaw who doesn't evaluate this. Of course, are we ever going to end high-speed chases? Not with mere legislation.

There are some interesting and very high-tech Jetson type—remember the Jetsons?—of proposals about ways of automatically turning those off. I'm sorry. I don't think the technology is there yet. If the purported technology is there, it's as likely to shut off my Chevy truck when I'm travelling home on the QEW doing the speed limit, or yours, as it is the pursued vehicle's. That's the reality of it. Some day that technology may exist, and then we'll be a lot closer towards avoiding—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Starting with Chev trucks, then Ford trucks.

Mr Kormos: Well, as a matter of fact, I've got to tell you, we had the Santa Claus parade in Welland on Saturday. Then last Sunday we had it in Thorold. We are doing Fenwick's next weekend, I think. David Chev-Olds—I've told you about them, the Chev dealer up on Niagara Street—gave us a vehicle to drive in. It's a unionized shop. They gave us a year 2000 Monte Carlo SS, a beautiful car. We put my sign on the side and their signs too, but they're incredible. David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street: a union shop, which means, you see, the mechanics are paid salaries. They're not on piecework, job by job, so they don't have to rush the job, nor do they have to sell you work that you don't need. I've trusted them absolutely for I guess at least 20 years now. I'm grateful to them for supporting the community, because I'm not the only person who has had a car from David Chev-Olds in these small-town parades, those small towns whose future is very much at risk. So David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street, and also Cathy Robertson, who has sold me every car I've bought in the last 20 years. Incredible. I trust her absolutely: 735-3690. An incredible dealership and one that I have the highest regard for, and one I want to thank for making sure we've got a car for these parades. They do it all the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): My, we digress.

Mr Kormos: High-speed chases: Parliamentary Assistant, you've got two minutes to respond. You tell me whether you think the confiscation of a vehicle as part of the penalty provisions here—are you with us or against us? Do you want to join together to toughen up this legislation so we give the cops a break, so we give them the best possible odds they could hope for? I think you're starting to hit home when you talk about confiscation as well. It's not inconsistent, but again it varies very much from the impounding: 45, 90, 180 days. Again, I tell you as well, I'm concerned about government having regulatory power to exempt. The problem with regulatory power is that it happens in the secrecy of cabinet. It shows up where, in the regulations committee? But it's done in the secrecy of cabinet and isn't the subject matter of debate. That's why I'm concerned about it.

We publicly pass the law that said "Impound the vehicle" if they catch you driving under suspension. But now we're giving—not just this government, any subsequent government—the power to, without debate, exempt drivers, or classes of drivers, or vehicles, or classes of vehicles, from the impoundment provisions or from the compounding of the impoundment provisions.

I don't think impounding is relevant here. This activity is simply too dangerous. And why I find confiscation even more attractive is that it helps them to involve other people in ensuring that drunk or suspended drivers, the two drivers most likely to lead police in a high-speed chase, don't drive. It means that you don't lend your car to a suspended or drinking driver.

Quite frankly, this is where the regulations contained in the red tape bill concern me, because I was worried that, among other things, Hertz and Avis rental car companies were going to be among the exempted owners. I was also worried that you were going to exclude, let's say, lenders of cars; to wit, your neighbour, your spouse, your parent or your child. I was very uncomfortable with that because that relieves them of the responsibility to make sure that suspended drivers don't drive your car, because now you can be like the little boy who wet the bed and simply say: "I don't know. I don't know how that happened, how it got there."

Mr O'Toole: "It wasn't me."

Mr Kormos: That's right. "I didn't know they didn't have a licence." And that covers you.

I'm talking about making other people share some of the responsibility. And you know that whomever you lend your car to or whomever you let use your car is the type of person who maybe fits into a profile of somebody who might flee from the cops, you're not going to lend them the car. You've got to accept some responsibility for that too.

Isn't that what it's all about? Making sure the community accepts a little bit of the responsibility as well so that cops aren't put into these scenarios? So that we don't read about it in the paper on Monday morning and engage in all that dramatic armchair quarterbacking where we try to second-guess the cops. But we still mourn the loss of any life.

I'd like very much to see the technology that would eliminate high-speed chases, but it's not here yet.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Quite frankly, it's not here yet, PA. Don't be razzle-dazzled by those sorts of things. Come on. You didn't just fall off the turnip truck; I know that much. You know a little better than that. It's the same as the fingerprinting technology. Whatever the companies were—I think they were Texas-based, were they?—what they were doing was trying to sell that stuff to government so they could do their R&D with public money. Because it doesn't work.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): And you bought it, right?

Mr Kormos: It's a scam. It's the same scam as what you're talking about. They want the public sector to fund their R&D. So just cool down a little bit. I'm not saying the technology will never happen, OK? I'm saying, don't be misled by the "Oh, watch this" sort of stuff. Out there on the road, in the wet, the ice and the snow, no, that technology isn't available yet.

2030

The other issue is that it's pretty ominous stuff. You might want to explain how that proposed technology works. Does that mean that a hacker, for instance, could shut down any of our vehicles? Does it?

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: You seem to know a little bit more about current technology than some of your colleagues.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: It's true. There are pros and cons.

That's been the problem. I appreciate that I'm somewhat Luddite in my whole approach to this. I appreciate that. Touch-Tone phone technology is wonderful. I got a Touch-Tone phone a couple of years ago, because I was going to be darned if those thieves at Bell Canada were going to charge me for a phone and then charge me extra for a Touch-Tone phone.

Mr Bradley: Who?

Mr Kormos: The thieves and scoundrels at Bell Canada. How dare they call a dial phone—catch this. They call a dial phone their base phone, but you can't get a dial phone. "Here's the base charge for the phone; it's a dial phone." "OK, give me a dial phone." "We don't supply dial phones." "What are you talking about, the base charge, you thieves?"

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): They keep calling you for it: "Return that rotary phone."

Mr Kormos: It's a consumer fraud and these guys should be brought into line.

Mr Bradley: What about the banks?

Mr Kormos: Which one? Toronto-Dominion Bank, which stole \$700 from me? You remember that, don't you, Jim? You talk about crime. The parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General should know about this, because I spoke about this at length several times, trust me, in this House.

It was an account that had a few bucks in it, maybe \$1,000, from 20 years ago when I articulated or did my bar admission course here in Toronto down at Osgoode. I had the bank account and, from time to time, I put a few bucks in it. Then several years went by during which I hadn't made any deposits, and I was shy some cash. I went, "OK, I've got bucks there." I went down to the bank, trusting that banks are there to take care of your money. Not only did I not have any money, they told me I owed them money because the service charges accumulated still after they emptied the account. They stole my money, the Toronto-Dominion Bank.

Interjection: It wasn't a unionized bank?

Mr Kormos: That's part of the problem. When I talked about this a few years ago, I urged people to take their money out of the bank before they steal yours too, because they stole mine.

Mr Wettlaufer: Did it help their bottom line?

Mr Kormos: Oh, it helped their bottom line, you bet your boots, yes. Holy cow. If you want to start talking about crimes, Parliamentary Assistant to the Solicitor General, have we got something to talk about when it comes to banks. Multi-billion dollar profits, and how do they respond to multi-billion profits? By laying off more staff, by creating more unemployment.

Don't get suckered into this telephone banking. All you're doing is taking away people's jobs. Don't get conned into telephone banking. I appreciate that there are maybe some people who are housebound, people who are stuck in their homes, ill people. But please, don't get suckered into telephone banking, because the ultimate goal of these folks is to create virtual banks, right?

Mr Bradley: Are their profits dropping?

Mr Kormos: Their profits are climbing. Let's understand what George Soros said. George Soros—one of the wealthiest men in the world, and a strong advocate of capitalism; no pinko, George Soros—in his most recent book, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, writes about how let's understand, let's cleanse ourselves of this myth that corporations are there to provide service and create employment, create jobs and all those nice and warm things. Corporations are, as you folks know, artificial entities that have no heart, no soul. Their job is to make money. There is nothing inherently wrong with that, I would like to do it someday myself, but the job of corporations is to make money, to make profits, and you make profits by generating the highest revenues and hiring the fewest people. It's as simple as that. It's not rocket science.

Soros comments on this because he wants his colleagues in that international corporate world to understand that the more people you lay off, the more people you force down into lower-wage jobs, you start to erode your own consumer base. The people who make your Sony television set, in what Pacific Rim country, can't afford to buy one, but a high-wage economy worker, which was traditional in North America and most parts of western Europe, could.

As we see the abandonment of the high-wage economy, as we see the corporate world making huge profits and doing it by laying off more workers and endorsing the whole concept of part-time work, contract work, Soros warns that that multi-national corporate world is at risk of literal self-embowelment, if you will, something akin to corporate and economic hara-kiri. Please keep that in mind.

Let me finish up on Bill 22. Parliamentary Assistant, I tell you, I haven't hidden my light under a bushel here. Last week I talked candidly with one of your staff people in the ministry, Bill Campbell, from the minister's office. He called to say, "What are your concerns about the bill?" I told him, "We want to see speedy passage." But I also told him that the police association, as you know, has been calling for more than just increased fines and periods of imprisonment; they've been calling for confiscation, for forfeiture. Quite frankly, I agree with them.

I put it to you, Parliamentary Assistant, that if you want to bring those amendments in your name, as I say, I'm going to give them to you as soon as I get them from leg counsel. I've requested them. If you want to move them yourself, by all means, feel free. We'll support them. If you don't want to move them, I'll move them, but then I'm asking you to support them as well.

If you really want it, let's start doing this stuff right. I'll concede that too much has been done wrong for too long, too many times, especially when it comes to cops and policing, and in a whole lot of other areas too, but especially when it comes to cops and policing.

Maybe somebody's trying to strike some middle ground here between what the police want and what

someone—there's logic to confiscation, to forfeiture to the crown, as part of the penalty provisions of this bill. You're talking about one of the most dangerous activities on the road: the high-speed chase. It puts the cops at risk. It kills cops and it injures them. It puts the civilian community at risk. It kills civilians and it kills and maims pedestrians. Let's do everything we can; not close to what we can, let's go all out. Let's go hell-bent and amend this bill to contain penalties which include confiscation.

You know what? As we assess the scenario, we all know that legislation in itself isn't going to stop high-speed chases, but it's the best we can do under the circumstances. As we acquire or become exposed to new technology, let's make sure we're prepared to grab the bull by the horns and make the investment in that too and make sure that cops have access to it and that they're trained how to use it. Come on, you know these police officers, Parliamentary Assistant. I know you do. I know them too. As has been noted, they're our families, our friends, our neighbours. These are people who are incredibly committed to the welfare of their communities.

Also, Parliamentary Assistant, take a look around some police services not too far from here and look at the incredible pressures on police, and the declining morale and the problems that brings with it. Let's make this bill one that the police can be proud of, that we can be proud of and that the community can be proud of.

2040

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mazzilli: It's been a pleasure to hear from the member for Brant, from the official opposition, in support of the bill.

If we can refocus back to what the intention of Bill 22 is, it's an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act in relation to suspensions. So that's after the fact. At this point we are no longer trying to prevent anything. The police pursuit has occurred; now it's a question of punishment. In order to do that, we're providing for court-ordered driver's licence suspensions of not less than 10 years and up to life, to be consecutive in cases involving death or bodily harm, and increased provisions for driver's licence suspensions up to five years for escape by flight by doubling the fines.

The member from Niagara Centre has put a proposal. Talk about an omnibus bill; he wants to look after suspensions, he wants to look after training, he wants to look after confiscation, he wants to look after unionized workers in his riding. Certainly he understands that cannot be done in one bill.

Our ministry is committed to preventing police pursuits. We've invested in the helicopter evaluation projects, three on their way in York-Durham, Peel-Halton-Hamilton-Wentworth, and London, and a fourth in Toronto is presently on hold.

With Bill 22 we are targeting, along with the official opposition, criminals who flee the police.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My memory of when I was younger is that the need for police

chases was relatively rare. Certainly in my own case, all through high school and university I drove an Austin Mini; it was absurd. It wasn't much of a car, but it was better than a Ford. There was also the sense at that time that we didn't even think about doing that. There was a different atmosphere there.

I wonder at times whether TV shows such as *Cops*, with the American style of life, have encouraged people to take off and run more. It is being glamorized every week on TV.

I can think back to many years ago when it was funny to drink and drive. There were jokes made and all kinds of humour, and ridiculous things people said when they were drinking and then went driving. Then we realized the seriousness of it. I believe there has been a substantial change in that type of crime, and I give a great deal of credit to MADD, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, who worked from the grassroots to say: "This is wrong. People are dying; people are being injured." I believe they produced a real change in this province.

I'm hearing a grassroots movement again to stop police pursuits, to say that we need to give the police the weapons to prevent this. For young people, I think the loss of a licence is a very serious threat. I'm not saying all police pursuits are necessitated by young people, but I think the majority of them are. This government is doing its own bit to reduce that by making it so difficult for them to get appointments to go and get their driver's exams, but for those who manage to work their way through the system and get in their car—

Mr Bradley: The minister should resign.

Mr Parsons: Thanks, Jim—we need a penalty in place that will cause them to not take off. There are too many lives at risk when they do.

We need to get on with it now, and I heartily endorse this bill.

Ms Martel: I listened carefully to the debate—I was here for all of it—and I listened to the response by the parliamentary assistant. I am wondering if he was in the same place here tonight as I was. My colleague from Niagara Centre talked about one amendment that he now has legislative counsel drafting, to be shared with the parliamentary assistant and the members of the Liberal Party, to hopefully be moved in committee if we can get the committee to sit next Monday and Tuesday. It can, and this bill could go there. It's available for that.

The one amendment would be simply this: that your car will be confiscated if you try to flee the police. Point final. That's not difficult; that's not complicated. He didn't move an amendment about training or about this and that; he talked about one single thing and he asked for your support for it. He's asked the Liberals for their support for it.

You have premised this bill on a deterrent. You have said, "Once we put all these fines in, this will act as a deterrent for people who want to flee the police." We say there is one additional single important thing that you can do, and the police are interested in this. You can get even tougher and say to people, "Not only will you have to

deal with fines and other things; your car will be confiscated." That will be a deterrent for people who are fleeing the police. It's a simple thing to do. It's a single amendment. But in order to get that amendment moved, because we can't move into committee of the whole any more because you guys changed those rules, we have to bring this bill to committee. It could go to the justice committee next Monday and Tuesday, and if you folks like it, you can move the amendment. We don't care. If you don't like it, we'll move it there. But at least allow the committee to sit.

Surely you must agree that this would be a deterrent. Why don't you support this simple thing?

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Bradley: I understand there are questions and comments, and I enjoyed the member's speech very much, particularly those parts which were relevant to the bill, such as his tirade against the banks. I can tell you, he was right on. All these people do is make unprecedented profits—right on—and then they boot the bodies out in the streets. They're talking now about eliminating 17,000 jobs in the banking system while the banks are making huge profits. I want to say to the member that he's absolutely right.

What they do as well is they cut back their hours. At the Royal Bank at the Grantham Plaza in St Catharines at one time not that long ago, they had banking hours from 8 in the morning to 8 in the evening—so if you were coming to Queen's Park, you could go and do your banking in the morning before you left—and then from 9 in the morning on Saturday to 5 in the afternoon. That keeps shrinking.

Interjection: Canada Trust.

Mr Kormos: The member mentions Canada Trust. I wish that were the case. I think one of the big banks has purchased Canada Trust and they're going to close them all down. It's open 8 to 8, and I was going to go to Canada Trust there, but I know that one of the big banks—not the Royal Bank—has purchased Canada Trust, and you watch them close them all down.

So we're getting less service, fewer people have jobs there, and the banks still continue to make huge profits. That's a blip in the stock market, and the CEO gets a big bonus for that and everybody around the Albany Club cheers him on. But I'm going to tell you that people in St Catharines, the rank-and-file people, don't like the services that are being lost, the across-the-counter personal services that should be part of banking. I think the member is absolutely right in his remarks in that regard.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Look, I've made a very simple proposition this evening. Please. We indicated that we were going to participate in speedy passage of this bill, and we will. You know that I'm on the justice committee, and I am prepared, as a member of the subcommittee, to arrange for the justice committee to consider this bill Monday and Tuesday of next week, the 13th and 14th. I

have but one goal, and that's to move one amendment to beef up the penalty provisions here.

I don't want to hear this stuff about, "Oh, what if they're not the owner of the car?" We talked about that during the course of my comments. I talked about the amendment being worded—and I've yet to receive it from leg counsel; I'll give it to you as soon as I have it—to permit an interested party, to wit the bona fide or legitimate owner in those cases of a stolen car, to make an application to a judge. But I also don't think there should be exemptions for people who lend their car to a family member.

2050

Interjection: Or borrow.

Mr Kormos: Or who borrow a car. Exactly. Let's start putting some onus on people who don't do due diligence about who they let drive their car. Is it regrettable? Of course it's regrettable. But damn it, every time a cop is killed, it's regrettable. Every time a pedestrian is injured or slain, it's bloody regrettable. Are these tough provisions, the amendments? You bet your boots they are. So I say to you, Parliamentary Assistant, show your stuff and tell me that you endorse that amendment being discussed and approved by committee.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mazzilli has moved second reading of Bill 22. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Mr Mazzilli: I ask that it be referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

The Acting Speaker: So ordered.

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I seek unanimous consent to call the orders for concurrence in supply for the following ministries and offices and that they be debated together: Municipal Affairs and Housing; Education and Training; Office of the Premier; Solicitor General and Correctional Services; Community and Social Services; Environment; Health; Attorney General; Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat; Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; that at the end of tonight's debate there be a recorded division on the concurrences, and that it be deferred until tomorrow, December 7, 1999, at "Deferred Votes."

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is there unanimous consent for Mr Klees's motion? Agreed.

Hon Mr Klees: I therefore move concurrence in supply for the following ministries and offices:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Ministry of Education and Training

Office of the Premier

Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Ministry of the Environment

Ministry of Health

Ministry of the Attorney General

Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat
Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees has moved concurrence in support for the following ministries and offices—*Interjection.*

The Acting Speaker: Dispense.

Just before you start, the time will be split. Three hours will be split evenly between the three parties.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I will be dividing my time with the member for Peterborough and the member for Durham.

It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to concurrences. I'd like to go back a few years for the benefit of the members opposite. I know the Liberals will recall that in the red book they said—this is in 1995 now, remember—they would add \$17 billion to the debt before they balanced the budget. That's very interesting, because we've come under a fair amount of criticism from the Liberal Party over the last couple of years about the fact that the debt has actually increased during our term. The Liberals like to take one position and then they like to take the other position. They like to have it both ways.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): That's the definition of being a Liberal.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's the difference between a Conservative and a Liberal. That's right.

It brings to mind a discussion I had with a member of the NDP during a committee hearing, probably three years ago. This member of the NDP said, "You know, Mr Wettlaufer, you and I will never, ever philosophically agree, but we have our principles, something the Liberals don't have." I did want to bring that out because it does point out something very specific. Something else occurred today—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Speaker: I want the member for Kitchener Centre to help out the House, if he can. Was this a discussion of a promise not to close hospitals in the province?

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Wettlaufer: That really brings up an interesting point, and I'm glad the member for St Catharines raised it, because in my riding of Kitchener Centre we have a hospital that the Liberals in their administration let go so badly that a doctor made the statement that the ICU-CCU in that hospital was the equivalent of a Third World hospital. That was because the Liberal government ignored that hospital. In fact, the Liberal government ignored health care in my riding. That is unconscionable.

Mr Bradley: Is that St Mary's?

Mr Wettlaufer: It was St Mary's, yes, a hospital which has been saved, thanks to the health care restructuring commission. St Mary's hospital has also had not only a reprieve but now they are going to receive a cardiac centre, something that you people didn't even feel Kitchener needed. The Liberals felt that we didn't need a cardiac centre. They felt that we didn't need a cancer care centre. They felt that we didn't need an MRI. They felt that we didn't need specialist services and they

sure as heck didn't care that we had an underservice problem even 10 years ago.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: The member for St Catharines is trying to humour me by telling me that he's going to send me a Christmas card. Well, I sent you one too.

The Liberals do have problems. They go from one position to the next. Today, in this very House, the Liberal leader and the Liberal Party all stood up, and do you remember what they did? They voted against the municipal restructuring bill that our government introduced. I want the people who are watching this on television to understand that during the election campaign the Liberals campaigned on restructuring. They came out in favour of restructuring municipal governments, and today they stood in this House and they opposed it. They stood in this House and opposed tax cuts. Yes, they opposed tax cuts, but they turned around and they voted for a balanced budget. They voted for the taxpayer protection act.

I do recall that on June 2, 1999, the London Free Press printed an article, and member for St Catharines, you'll recall this. This was just before the election campaign this year. The Free Press reporter called Dalton McGuinty in his hotel room and his wife, Terri, answered the phone from the morning show hosts Pete, Jeff and Mindy. I guess it wasn't the London Free Press that called him, it was the morning show. McGuinty was heard telling her—and I'm quoting from the newspaper article here—"Tell them I'm in the shower." That indicates to me that he was afraid to take a position because he knew he would have to contradict it later on. It's a terrible thing, just a terrible thing.

We talk about tax cuts. We know what it has done. But I'd like to take you back a few years again, if I may. I'm quoting now from the Kitchener-Waterloo Record and the date is Wednesday, May 7, 1997. "Gerry Phillips, Liberal MPP and the party's finance critic, says the tax cut is not working. 'Everybody likes a tax break, but another \$3 in someone's pocket isn't going to be the sort of thing that kick-starts the economy.'"

2100

You'll remember, Mr Speaker—I know you will because we heard it so often from the member from Scarborough-Agincourt over the last few years—he said: "Oh, you're not producing the jobs you said. You weren't producing the jobs in the first month or the second month or the third month after the tax cuts." A year later, he said, "Oh, you're still not on track to produce those jobs" We knew on this side of the House that there was a thing called economic lag. We knew that. They had a little trouble with that. But do you know, Mr Speaker—I wonder where the member is going. He doesn't like hearing this. Member from St Catharines, I wonder if you gave back your tax cut.

We heard the member from Scarborough-Agincourt over a whole period of about three years saying: "The jobs aren't coming. You said you were going to produce these jobs. They're not coming." Then all of a sudden,

after the economic lag disappeared, the jobs started coming. What has happened in that time? We now have produced—not our government. We have created an environment in which 640,000 net new jobs have been created in less than five years. We said that 725,000 net new jobs would be created in five years. According to all of the economic experts, we're on target to produce those jobs.

The members opposite criticized the tax cuts. It's very interesting. In May 1996, when the budget was introduced, we allowed—thanks to the hard work of the member from Waterloo-Wellington, Mr Ted Arnott—provision for the members to pay back the tax cut into a special fund which would be applied to the debt.

Mr Bradley: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Wettlaufer: This is not a point of order. I know what's coming, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Point of order, the member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: The member did use my name in the House and ask what I did with my tax cut, so that's a point of order.

The Acting Speaker: I don't think it is, unfortunately.

Mr Bradley: I gave it to charity because so many charities needed money after they underfunded everything in this province.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm really glad the member from St Catharines gave it to charity. I wonder which charities he gave it to.

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, the Liberal Party. In other words, what you're saying, member from St Catharines, is that you did not give back your tax cut.

Member from Timmins-James Bay, you talk a lot about the tax cuts too and how dangerous they are—

The Acting Speaker: I just would like to remind the member from Kitchener Centre, the debate is supposedly through the Chair, so try to at least allude to that.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Speaker. Through you, Mr Speaker, I would like to ask the member from Timmins-James Bay what he did with his tax cut. I wonder if he gave it back to the government, to that special fund. He's shaking his head no. So far, of all the members I have asked, last week and this week, not one of them has admitted to giving the tax cuts back to the government. Now isn't that interesting? They say how damaging—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: They wanted a Mercedes. Yes, right.

I would just like to conclude my remarks by saying that there were two articles written by grade 10 students over the course of the last few years—I cut the articles out of the Kitchener-Waterloo Record—and one grade 10 student at the time—I would guess he might be 20 years old now—said:

"Ontario is in trouble. It is close to \$100 billion in debt. The interest on this money alone is causing Ontario to dig itself into a deeper and deeper hole every year. The protestors are too proud, too stubborn and too greedy to

make sacrifices when our province is going through tough times. Is it really even Harris they should be mad at? Who are the real creators of this gigantic problem? If we look back to the booming 1980s, we will find the authors of our present economic state."

You know, David Peterson's name is mentioned in here as being one of the authors. He says: "All Harris is attempting to do is mend the tears in our economic fabric caused by all the short-sighted political geniuses who knew nothing but their current prosperity."

"I am not angry with the way Harris is dealing with the difficult situation before him."

"He is not the murderer of our province, as many people have made him out to be. He is the doctor trying to revive a dying economy."

That was Garth Cressman, as I said, at the time a grade 10 student at Waterloo-Oxford District Secondary School.

This next one was written by Dennis Hahn, a grade 10 student at St David Catholic Secondary School in Waterloo. This also was about three or four years ago. He says:

"If there was ever a time Ontarians needed to stick together, it is now. This debt isn't going to go away if we ignore it. We must deal with it."

"We must also have respect for Harris. He must abolish a \$100-billion debt and still make our conditions liveable. Either we get rid of our debt or let our grandchildren deal with it."

This was written by a grade 10 student as well. These two grade 10 students had more insight than the members of the opposition parties.

I will conclude my remarks now and let the member for Peterborough take his time.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The words "tax cut" seem to cause so much enjoyment on the other side, but I would like to share with the group a list that my constituents have shared with me when they've come into the office. We need to talk about the benefits those tax cuts have produced, or the lack of benefits.

What have we done to get the tax cuts? In some cases we've stopped feeding children. It's easy to talk about welfare people and how we have to reduce their benefits, but half the people on welfare are children, and they are not eating as well as they did four and a half years ago. I don't need statistics. I can simply look at the number of schools now operating breakfast clubs for hungry children.

I look at workfare. Where we have people not prepared to participate in workfare, their family unit receives a cut. I know the cut is supposed to just be for that person who's not doing the workfare, but children in that home are sharing some of that pain and those cuts. I guess it is even a little tougher to understand when I realize the millions and millions of dollars that went to American consultants to deal with welfare and workfare. At least it

could have stayed in this province, but we shipped the money south for it.

What else have we done to achieve the tax cuts? We've reduced staffing in our hospitals. Let's not go by the press releases; let's go into a hospital emergency ward and see people in the hallways. Let's deal with the people who phone and say their parents can't get a room in the hospital. Or talk to an 82-year-old constituent of mine: an operation at 7 o'clock in the morning; 11 o'clock, sent home. For her, that tax cut caused a great deal of pain. For an operation that was relatively serious, an 82-year-old woman was sent home to be looked after by her 89-year-old husband. She helped to pay for the tax cut for the people.

We've reduced the support to students for special ed. I accept that the government is correct when it says we're spending more money on special ed than we did in previous years, but we need to look at special ed funding. Traditionally some of it has come from the provincial government and some from the local board. The local board's ability to raise that special ed funding has gone, so the total spent—not the total spent by the government, but the total spent on special ed—is less than it was before.

As I see that leaked document and I see the plans for more cuts, I'll share with you that for the Hastings and Prince Edward board, they transferred nearly \$500,000 out of administration into special ed to make it work in their board area. If there's an additional cut to administration, which sounds politically great, that's \$500,000 that won't go into special ed.

We stopped bearing a responsibility for provincial ambulance services, downloaded it. We passed it on to the local municipalities, because that produces more tax cuts. So now the citizens of Ontario had better hope they live in an area with high assessment, a good industrial base, because the quality of their ambulance service depends on their local assessment rather than on their previous rights as an Ontario citizen to have good ambulance service.

2110

We've stopped maintaining roads. The auditor acknowledged that. The percentage of Ontario roads is deficient. The number of roads that truly are provincial highways that were downloaded on to municipalities—and that will work because the government did give a lot of money up front and the roads were all painted black and new yellow lines were put on them and they look great, but five years from now and 10 years from now, the crunch will come when these new roads are owned by municipalities that don't have the tax base to do the support on them that they were able to do in the past.

We cut the number of licence bureaus in this province. That's an issue. For the older residents in my riding, having to travel greater distances to get their driver's licence renewed is a burden, but it did produce a small tax cut for the higher-wage earner.

We stopped busing students as much as we used to. There was certainly room for improvements and for cuts

there, but I see an urbanization philosophy taking place in this province. For students who reside in an urban area, it's easy to stay after school and take part in extracurricular activities, or play on the football team, or belong to a club or stay and talk to a teacher about a particular problem.

For years and years in this province they were able to catch a late bus back home. Now they can't. The funding formula doesn't allow for late buses. For students in a rural area who may have parents who are not able to come and pick them up, the opportunity to stay after school and take part in these activities is gone. But that helped pay for some of the tax cuts.

Cuts to agricultural offices: As I said a minute ago, we're thinking in terms of the big city. If it works in Toronto, it will work everywhere. Agricultural offices have been the lifeblood. I had a constituent in my office last Friday almost in a panic when he realized the downsizing, because for him, the people from the ag office weren't in his face telling him what to do; the people from the ag office were there to keep him informed of the newest developments taking place in his industry, which happens to be apple growing for him. The research and the new information coming from Guelph or Alfred or Kemptville was given to him by his ag representative. That person won't be there now. But it paid for some of the tax cuts.

We have nearly 300 fewer police officers in Ontario now than we did four years ago. But we all got a little tax cut.

We've stopped giving people a voice in Ontario. That produced a small tax cut. We don't go through public hearings. We can dictate out of this building, is the philosophy. There's no recognition of legally elected municipal representatives, who were elected to play a role. We're still seeing decisions made that were made by these elected officials, but now they're being made by employees. No disrespect to the employees, but the virtue of the old system of having relatively low-paid elected officials was that when the public disagreed with their actions, they had an opportunity every three years to change the municipal council. As more and more decisions are being made by employees rather than elected officials, there's a little bit of democracy—I know democracy costs money and I know democracy gets in the way of a lot of actions, but democracy has been eroded with that reduction.

The worst example of that, to me, is Toronto. I certainly am not in the position to say that we should have 22 or 44 or 57, but I think the people in Toronto should have input into that. That input may be through their legally elected officials, but to give them a day or a day and a half is a bully tactic. I'm embarrassed by that. To the rest of the world it looks like we're doing our planning on the back of an envelope in Ontario. I fear too often we are.

We've all accumulated a little bit of a tax cut by stopping protecting the environment. I think that's wrong. I'm looking at the mega-dump situation by my

own riding, how fast it is happening and how brief it is going to be with not a lot of opportunity for the people to have input in it, because they have no money to put forward their case. They cannot get on a level playing field when we have a large organization funding as a proponent for the dump and I have hundreds and hundreds of people in my riding passing around a galvanized pail to try to collect enough money to hire a lawyer and hire consulting firms to do the test wells to give them the data to fight back. It's not a level playing field for them. But we've got a little bit of a tax cut by letting the environment go away.

This list can go on and on. We're dealing with fewer nurses and one time, not that many years ago, we referred to them as hula hoop workers and no longer needed. Now we're in a situation of not being able to hire them all back. But we saved a few dollars when we let the nurses go, I'm told. I'm not convinced of that by the time we did severance. We lost a group of extremely dedicated and committed individuals who provide front-line service. I see money spent on training nurse practitioners, but I see no funding for them because we need that little bit of a tax cut.

I believe there is a need for us to balance these tax cuts with the very real pain we've inflicted on this province and ask, are we spending our money wisely?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Again we get an opportunity in the House to speak on concurrence, which gives us the opportunity to speak on a number of different issues, and I'll take my opportunity to do that because there are a number of things I want to put on the record.

More importantly, there are a number of things I want to bring to the attention of the governing party because I think it's important to do so. One of things at the forefront of my mind and I think in the minds of a lot of people in the riding Timmins-James Bay and particularly in the community of the city of Timmins is the situation with what's happening in the mining industry.

Mr Speaker, you would know, as you come from northern Ontario, that the mining industry is a very fragile industry in the sense that if we are not doing the kind of investment necessary to reinvest in exploration, to make sure we're replacing the ore bodies that are being depleted as we mine them, if we don't keep that investment up to the top level possible, as we mine the reserves go down and eventually mines start to close because there is no ore to replace them.

As we look across northern Ontario we're seeing less and less mining exploration going on, not only around the city of Timmins but we have far less mining exploration, I would argue, in your riding of Algoma and many other ridings across northern Ontario than there was even five years ago. That bothers me to no extent because I come from a community, as the members from Sudbury or Nickel Belt do, that basically relies to a great extent on the activities of mining.

It wasn't uncommon even four or five years ago to go to any particular diamond drilling outfit, be it Redpath or

Dominik Drilling or whatever other organization, any other one that was out there, and see that no drills were available in the yard. In other words, machines were out in the bush drilling. They were out doing the business they are there to do, and that is to explore and try to find new ore bodies to keep the mining stocks in this province, when it comes to the reserves on the properties, up to a good level so we can keep on mining into the future.

We look at the industry today and we're seeing that there are far more diamond drill machines or rigs, as we call them, sitting in the yards of those companies rather than being out in the bush doing the work they do. I think of good friends of mine who operate Courte Diamond Drilling in Timmins not getting the kind of business they used to get years before.

There's a reason for that. Sure, part of it is global. I would not argue that globalization has not had a negative effect on mining. We're seeing what happens across the world. There are far more properties coming into production. The potential of developing new properties in Third World countries is very attractive to large multinationals because they say, "I can go into some country and not have to deal with any environmental regulations, or very weak ones, or only have to pay workers a dollar an hour," if they're lucky to get a dollar an hour."

Some unscrupulous outfits, I would argue some of the multinationals, will go off and do that. Here in Ontario, as you would know, Mr Speaker, the geology of Ontario is among the best geology in the world and we have really good potential in this province to be able to find mines. Not only is the geology good, but we have the expertise in this province when it comes to both the exploration people, the mining people themselves and all of the associated trades and professions and workers that go with that particular industry. There are some very strong reasons why Ontario is a good place to do mining.

2120

But we're seeing far less exploration in Ontario, I would argue, not only because of what's happening in regard to the world economy and what's happening with multinationals moving a lot of their investment outside of Ontario. I believe one of the reasons they're doing so is that this government is not as effective as it should be in trying to promote the kind of work that needs to be done in mining.

I look back to the glory days of what we called flow-through shares. That would have been back through the 1970s and 1980s, where mining corporations and explorationists were doing all kinds of work in the exploration field. Grant you, they had a bit of a sweetheart deal going with the federal government when it came to flow-through shares. The federal government, I believe it was the Mulroney government, put an end to the flow-through shares, being able to write off 166% of the exploration that was going on. They dropped that down to somewhere around 100%. It tended to take away some of the ability to attract investment in exploration.

But what happened after is that there were successive governments in Ontario that were quite active in being

able to do all they could in order to try to fill the gap where the federal government had dropped the ball. I only speak of my time in government, from 1990-95, when the then Bob Rae government under the leadership of Shelley Martel, the then Minister of Mines, had a number of initiatives that we had put in place to support the mining exploration industry. As a result, mining exploration started to climb through 1992-93, to a high in 1994-95. We haven't seen that type of activity since. The reason why is that our government, the Bob Rae government, was very active in working with the industry and making sure that we built the kinds of partnerships that allowed us to put the types of programs together that they needed.

We strengthened programs like the Ontario mineral incentive program, otherwise known as OMIP. We put in place a system called ERLIS, the earth resource lands information system, that allowed explorationists to utilize all of the geophysics information we had on file in the province to find new mines. It was a successive number of initiatives that I think were key in being able to spur the industry and to bring it back up again.

But unfortunately we've seen over the last four years, since the time of this Conservative government, a halt to those types of initiatives. Sure, some of those programs exist. They got rid of OMIP; there's no longer any OMIP. You no longer can get money to assist with mining exploration, and that has had a negative effect. There are a few programs left over from that time. The ERLIS and the map system are still there, but by and large this government has taken the approach and said: "Hey, you know, private sector, it's up to you. Provincial government has got no responsibility. Let the private sector do it alone." Because this government knows—that's their mantra—if the private sector ain't going to do it, it's not worth doing. That's sort of their way of looking at things.

Yes, the private sector has a key role to play, but no realization that government has a role to play and that sometimes is to provide the type of infrastructure and support that's necessary in order to support industry and be able to support people in the work they do not only in mining but in other industries, but for this particular part of the debate, when it comes to mining.

Now we see slowly and slowly more and more mines closing across the province because there hasn't been the kind of exploration needed in order to keep those mines operating at the levels that they used to before. I just look since the time of this last election, 1995. Do you realize how many mines have closed down in the last six months in northeastern Ontario? Macassa mine in Kirkland Lake—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Resources aren't important.

Mr Bisson: The government member across says, "Resources aren't important." If that's your policy, you should come out and say that. But in reality, I think resources are important.

We see that what happens is that Macassa mine has gone down. The work that is associated with that as far as job loss is very humongous for the town of Kirkland Lake and the surrounding areas. It would be akin to coming into the city of Toronto and closing down probably five or six major employers. That would be akin to what has happened in Kirkland Lake.

We take a look at what has happened up at Detour Lake, north of Cochrane and Kapuskasing. That particular mine has come to the end of its life cycle, and it has shut down. We have now about 250 people who have lost their jobs up at Detour Lake. Those are people who lived in Timmins, people who lived in Elliot Lake, people who lived in different communities across northern Ontario, because it was a remote mine; there was no community there. People travelled in, stayed for a week and went back out again. It paid very good wages. That mine is down.

Government members across the way say, "That all has to do with the price of gold." Hogwash, I'll say, like Mike Harris. It's not all the price of gold. Part of it is that there hasn't been the type of exploration necessary to replenish those mines and the types of programs we need to support industry in difficult times to make sure they're able to stay alive and provide good-paying jobs to the people who work in that industry. We're talking about miners, electricians, mechanics, engineers, all kinds of skilled trades and professions that are needed to run a mine. It's a very complex business that pays very good dollars to the workers.

More specifically, I want to come to the point of what happened to Royal Oak up in Timmins. That particular mine is the third mine since June of last year to have closed down. In the community of Timmins, that's over 200 jobs. I would argue that closing down Royal Oak Mines in Timmins, 200-plus jobs, would be akin to coming into the city of Toronto and closing down five or six major employers. Those are good-paying jobs. Those are jobs that paid workers \$60,000 to \$80,000 a year, working underground as production miners. Those are good-paying jobs, where people paid taxes to the provincial and federal and municipal governments to make sure we had services there for them, their families and their neighbours. Why do I raise this in the House? Because I think it's important to raise so members are aware of what we are facing in this province when we don't take the steps we need to in order to give local communities and workers a bit more control over what goes on within their community.

I'll give you the story of Royal Oak. A while back, the owner of the former company was a woman by the name of Peggy Witte—"Miss Witty" as we used to call her. She was the glory girl of the mining industry. The Conservatives wine and dined her as much as they could. I remember local Conservatives in northern Ontario would wine and dine her as being the brightest, best, most brilliant mining person in Ontario. As a matter of fact, she made miner of the year, if you'll remember, not more than about four or five years ago. This very wise

person in the mining industry, as the Conservatives liked to make her out to be, didn't run her mine as efficiently as she should have. She put that corporation, Royal Oak Mines, into over \$600 million of debt with nothing to show for it.

Because she was so far in debt, she had to pull money out of her profitable mines. She was trying to start up a Kemess mine up in northern British Columbia. In order to find the dollars to finance the building of this new mine, rather than going out like most corporations would do and selling shares and doing the things that have to be done based on good geology, she basically stole the money out of the Timmins mine, Royal Oak, Timmins property, and also out of the Yellowknife mine up in the Northwest Territories, and sucked all the cash out of those corporations, those local companies. As a result, those companies didn't have the money to reinvest in their own mines to make sure that equipment was up to date, things were working properly and, more important—I come back to the first point—they didn't have the money to develop and do the kind of exploration that needed to be done so we had ore to last us into the future.

As a result, because the mine was mining a finite ore body, because there was no more exploration being done, to talk about—there was some, but not to the degree that needed to be done—the mines slowly came to a point where they were really scrambling to find the kind of ore they needed to make a profit. Finally, because of Mrs Witte's economic situation, the company was put into bankruptcy. She fled the country with a whole bunch of money in her pocket and ended up in Hawaii. She's doing quite fine. I have to say, like most Conservatives she fell on her feet. She made sure she took all the money she could out of that corporation and socked it away in her own personal bank account, hid it whatever way she could and she took off for Hawaii. That's what she did.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I'm just saying that's what she did. The Conservatives on the other side don't like that, but the fact is Mrs Witte did quite well. She bankrupted those corporations, those local companies, put those people out of work because of her mismanagement, the strong Conservative that she is, and in the end she took off, fled the country with the money she was able to put away.

2130

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I don't feel bad saying that. A spade is a spade. That's what she did. What do you think she did? She's sitting in Hawaii spending her money. Now she's trying to invest in another property in Africa somewhere. I guess she's going to go do her thing in Africa.

The point I make is this: This particular company ended up going bankrupt. As a result of that bankruptcy, the company was put under receivership under Price Waterhouse last spring. When it was put into receivership, they started a process to try to find new investors to buy either all of the company or part of the company, in this case Royal Oak Mines in Timmins. They started this process in May or June of last year. About that time, the

union, the United Steelworkers of America, Local 4440, and I, together eventually, went to the Price Waterhouse people and said, "Maybe the workers can try to pull something together to develop some kind of a partnership with the private sector, or alone, to put in a bid to buy this company, because the belief is, with the proper amount of investment when it comes to exploration, this mine could be made to make money."

Price Waterhouse, the good business people they are—they know how to run a business; Price Waterhouse is the best and the brightest of the corporate world of Ontario, and probably all Conservatives as well—said: "No, workers, don't come to us with an employee ownership bid. If the workers come forward, you're going to scare away whatever potential investors are able to come forward and make a bid." There lies the situation. So the workers and I sat down and said, "If there's an opportunity to find a way to buy this," and they're fairly confident there is, "we'll wait, provided that you give us the opportunity at the end to put together a bid." So two, three months went by, Price Waterhouse trotted different people into what they call the data room, to take a look at all the information as far as the economics of buying the place. The price of gold being what it is—that's part of the issue here—they decided collectively not to put forward a bid.

Lo and behold, one day—I believe it was at the end of August, beginning of September, on a Friday—Price Waterhouse called in the workers' union and said: "Hey, by Monday morning this place is closed and you're all gone. And by the way, no severance; no nothing." After 35 years, in some cases, of service in the place, people were being told they were gone. There was no notice. More often than not, they would end up in a very tenuous situation when it came to their severances and when it came to their pension rights.

So I immediately went to meet with the union. We sat down and talked about what could be done. We went to Price Waterhouse and said: "Hang on a second. You guys were supposed to give the workers and the community an opportunity to put in a bid, and you didn't do so. What about giving us the opportunity?" They didn't like the idea too much, and they said, "We think everything has been done that can be done," and "God, we don't want to go there," and all this type of stuff.

Do you know what ended up happening? The Steelworkers and I had to go before Judge Farley in the bankruptcy court and say, "Listen, the workers never got their opportunity." The judge said to himself: "They put forward a good case here. They were told to stay out of this process at the beginning, and Price Waterhouse more or less admitted that and didn't allow the workers to put together a bid." So the judge said, "I'll give you two weeks to put together an offer." Wow. We sat there and said, "Two weeks to put together an offer?" We had to come up with \$5 million in order to put forward a bid, and we had to put together a team to try to pull this thing together. We said to the judge, "We need a bit more time than two weeks," and Judge Farley—what his reasons

were, I don't know to this day—said, “Two weeks is what it's going to be.”

So we took off and did our thing. I met with a number of different private corporations to see if somebody was interested in coming forward to put together a bid with the workers. We sat down with the union and looked at different possibilities. Unfortunately, within the two-week period that we had, even though we were getting close to putting a deal together, we weren't able to put together the cash necessary. Consequently, we ended up going before the court in two weeks and the judge said, “That's that; we want Price Waterhouse to conclude a deal,” with a company called Kinross, that wanted to buy the mine on the basis of the assets, not on the basis of being able to operate it. If they pay \$5 million on the mine, there's probably \$5 million in assets sitting there.

Lo and behold, about a week after that particular point—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Member from Etobicoke, you haven't got an idea of what the heck you're talking about. You should sit down for a second. You know nothing about economics, so shut up. How's that?

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): It's your job to tell us to shut up.

The Acting Speaker: Precisely. It works much better in here when the member who has the floor, who happens to be the member for Timmins-James Bay, has the opportunity to speak without interjections.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I needed a bit of a break to grab a glass of water; I figured that would do the trick. I want to thank you across the way for that.

Anyway, I come back to the point. So here we were about a week after the judge had ruled in favour of giving time for Price Waterhouse to put a deal together with Kinross. Lo and behold, as these things work out, and I think members across the way would recognize how these things work out, we managed to pull together an investment group, unfortunately about five or six days after the fact. But we managed to put together an investment group that was prepared to put together the \$5 million. So here we were in a really weird situation. We had found the money and now we needed to find a way to put an offer on the table, because the judge had said, “You can't do this after a certain date.”

We went back to court when the court was supposed to resume. Back we go to Judge Farley, and you're going to like this story because this is a very interesting situation that has developed here. The investors, through a company called Potter Station—the owner of this particular company is Bill Moffatt—had put together a group of mining people who were interested in putting together an offer on this particular property in partnership with the workers. The workers, either by way of concession or by direct investment, would own a share in the company and then the investors' group, through Potter Station, would own a share by virtue of their own invest-

ment. We sat down and worked out not the details but grosso modo, as we say in French, how the deal would be structured: Potter Station and their investors coming in and investing cash, and the workers coming forward and investing, by direct investment—cash—or concessions as their part of the deal.

So here we were in a situation where we were able to put together an offer. Bill Moffatt and his group put together the secured credit necessary. They put together the letters from the bank to the court and to Price Waterhouse saying: “We have the money to be able to buy this thing. Here it is. It's secured. It's real cash. Look at it. The bank says we've got the money.”

Now here's our problem. We can make this offer—the Minister of Economic Development and Trade will find this interesting, because it's something we need to address in this Legislature somehow. We found ourselves in the position of not being able to put forward the offer by virtue of what was happening in the bankruptcy court. So when the court had to reconvene in order for Price Waterhouse to get themselves an instrument of the court to be able to finalize the deal with the buyers, Kinross, we managed to get in there and put forward the argument that, yes, we had missed our timeline, unfortunately—trying to buy a mine in two weeks is pretty impossible to do—but in three weeks we moved heaven and earth and we figured out a way to do it, lo and behold.

We put forward this letter of intent by the investors to the court, and finally Judge Farley said: “OK, I hear what you're saying. You guys have done your homework.” The community, the union, the investment group and myself had put together this particular offer. “I'll tell you what I'll do,” says Judge Farley by way of the motion that he wrote. He said, “All right, I direct Price Waterhouse to go forward and to close the deal with Kinross, but if that deal is not closed by a particular time, then I give you the ability, Price Waterhouse, to conclude a deal with the investors called Potter Station.” So we managed to get our offer in before the judge, and Price Waterhouse was in a position, should they choose, if Kinross was not able to close the deal by November 1, to conclude a deal with the new investors called Potter Station.

2140

Now, you say, what's the difference between the two? The difference is simply this: They were both offering the same amount of money, within \$200,000. Depending on how you looked at it, they were actually pretty even. Both Kinross, who wanted to buy the mine, and Potter Station, who wanted to buy the mine, substantially had the same monetary offer on the table. The difference was that Kinross doesn't want to operate it. They want to take the assets from the mine. There are trucks and there's mining equipment and different things that they can sell off. They'll recoup close to the \$5 million that they've paid for the purchase of the mine and then they'll sit on the property, and if the price of gold happens to go through the roof, who knows, maybe one day they'll reopen it. But up to about two days ago, Kinross mines has said they're not interested in operating the Royal Oak

property. I hope they change their mind. I sincerely hope they do. But up to now I was told by Kinross and I was told by Price Waterhouse, and it's common knowledge within the community, that Kinross does not want to operate it. They don't want to rehire the workers.

The Potter Station offer was to buy the mine, recall the majority of the workers, deal with severance rights, deal with pension rights, and accept environmental liability not only on the Royal Oak property but eventually the other properties that were part of Royal Oak: the McIntyre, the Timmins property etc. So from the provincial government's standpoint it's a good deal. From the standpoint of the community it's a great deal, because jobs are saved. From the standpoint of the workers—Minister, you'll agree—it's a great deal. Their jobs are back.

But because of the way the federal laws are written when it comes to bankruptcy, and some of the provincial laws as well, there is a process which is very weighted towards the big guys. People like Kinross have got lawyers. All they do is sit down and figure out, "How can we weasel our way into a deal?" Price Waterhouse, you know as well as I do, has got nothing but accountants, bean-counters and lawyers to do the same kind of thing. But you and me, Minister, as individuals trying to deal with those guys, go in there in a very unequal playing field. You know that. If you, Al Palladini—I forget your riding—Minister of Economic Development and Trade, wanted to go out and compete with these guys, you don't have enough money and you don't have the clout with the lawyers and such to put yourself on an even playing field. That's what we found out through this process.

Here's the really interesting point, and this is the gist of it. On November 1 there was supposed to be a conclusion of the deal between Kinross and Price Waterhouse, and if a deal wasn't made, we assumed automatically that Price Waterhouse would then turn to Potter Station and say: "All right, let's conclude a deal with you guys. Kinross were not able to meet their conditions; therefore we're going to conclude a deal." What did Price Waterhouse do? They said: "We couldn't cut a deal with Kinross; it didn't quite work out. Let's give it a 30-day extension."

You know what I'm talking about, Minister. You've seen this kind of deal-making before. A great big corporation like Price Waterhouse couldn't conclude a deal with another great, big corporation called Kinross, and they decided among themselves, probably over coffee or drinks after supper or a telephone conference—who knows?—to give Kinross a 30-day extension. They wouldn't give the workers or the community or the Steelworkers or Potter Station a two-minute extension, but they found it in their hearts to give Kinross 30 days to December 1.

I'll tell you, we were all jumping this high. The investors' group, myself, the workers, the union, the community, we were jumping this high. We were saying: "Hold it a second. We had to follow the timelines. When we went to court you said, 'Too bad; if you can't follow

the timeline I'm going to give Kinross an opportunity to close,' but the minute that Kinross couldn't follow the timeline, well, what the heck." The law's on their side. It's not your fault, Minister. I'm not blaming you on this. I'm just talking about where we're at. Here are these guys, they missed the timeline by—oops—30 days, and they get an extension.

I called up Price Waterhouse. I'm not going to give the name tonight because this still has to play itself out, but I called a very senior person within Price Waterhouse and said, "What in hell is going on?" He says, "Well, Gilles, you know, we've been negotiating with Kinross now for some time and it wouldn't be prudent on our part to all of a sudden walk away from Kinross when we're this close to closing a deal." I said: "The heck with it. The workers, the union, the community, the investors through Potter Station didn't get an opportunity like, 'Oops, we need another 24 hours or another 40 hours.' You guys wouldn't give it to us. We had to cry, beg and steal to get two weeks and that wasn't enough, and when we didn't have enough time, you said, 'Too bad.' What gives?" "Gilles, trust me."

And this is the point, Minister. You're going to love this. Price Waterhouse tells me, point blank, on November 1, "If we're not able to conclude a deal with Kinross by December 1, we will walk away from Kinross and we will go close the deal with Potter Station." I said: "That's fine and dandy, but 30 days will go on and you're now flooding the mine, and the longer you flood the mine and the longer you keep it closed, the more expensive it's going to be to open. We have to put some finality to this at some time. Let me go back to the investors and see if they're prepared."

I went back and sat down with Bill and others and we tried to see if the economics warranted waiting another 30 days. It was getting nip and tuck at that point, but Bill said: "OK, I'll hold my investors together. We'll sign another letter of understanding in regard to an offer by way of the banks. We'll secure our offer for another 30 days, but we can't go much further than that." You know as well as I do, Minister—you understand mining, I know—that if you start flooding a mine, if you start putting water at the bottom of the shaft, the higher the water goes the more expensive it is going to be to reopen that mine; not impossible, but more difficult.

I go back to Price Waterhouse and I say: "Listen, I'm still pissed at you. I still think you guys should close the deal with the workers through Potter Station. But the judge and the system have given you the hammer and you guys can do what you want. So all right, we'll be back on December 1 if you can't close the deal with Kinross." "No problem, Gilles. If we don't close by December 1, we'll come back and talk to Potter Station and we'll conclude a deal with them."

Well, tick-tock, tick-tock, 30 days go by. Guess what happened on December 1? They didn't close the deal with Kinross. Do you know what they did? "Let's get another extension." Price Waterhouse gave Kinross another extension. They were talking at the time about 20

days—it may turn out to be 15 days, but it's irrelevant at this point. They gave them another extension. There is something wrong with the laws of this land when big corporations are able to snuggle up to each other and make those kinds of deals to the detriment of the community and the workers.

The member from Etobicoke North was saying earlier: "What were you able to do? Did you get any money? What did the workers do?" We did what we had to do. We got the money. We put it on the table. We found the investors. We did what we had to do. We played the game by the rules, and what happens? These big corporations snuggle up to each other and say: "Oink, oink, we're going to work it out together. We're going to let that clock keep on ticking." They gave them another extension.

I've got to tell you, Speaker, and the minister across, that we need to do something about the laws of this land. I realize it's not all provincial jurisdiction, that some of this is federal. But we've got to do something that says, "There should be no such thing in this province and in this country as a law for the rich and then a law for the poor," because that's what this turns out to be. Big corporations do what the hell they want—I say "what the hell they want" because I'm mad, and you would be too if it was your community, I'm sure. Big corporations do what they want and we have to play by a different set of rules because they hold the power.

So here we are, and now the investors are getting a bit shaky at this point. I had a meeting with them on Friday night until about 11 o'clock at night. Bill is still there. He's saying: "I'm going to do my part. I'll try to hold my guys. I can't hold them all, because some of them are not as interested in staying now. They look at the water coming up the shaft. It's getting more expensive to re-open, Gilles. We look at the equipment; it's deteriorating. We look at how much more expensive this is to pull together. The longer we go, the tougher it's going to be. I might be there." So we're still working this out.

I've got to say to the minister, man, this has been a tough one. We did everything we had to do. Who would have thought, back in September, that the workers and the community would have been able to come up with a bid to save that mine? Everybody said it was impossible, that it couldn't happen, that nobody would be able to do it. Well, we did it. We pulled it off. We went up to bat at the bottom of the ninth, bases loaded; one swing with the bat was all we had, and we hit it. We didn't hit a home run, but we hit it out into the field and we got ourselves on to the bases and we were waiting to come into home and cash in on this thing. But the laws of the land are such that the larger corporations have a much heavier hand. I've got to say, it is really frustrating. There will be more on this particular issue later.

I want to say to the members across the way, if we're talking about economic activity and how well the economy is doing and all the things you think you can do well, then if you can do anything, work with me and work with others to get laws that work for people, so

when communities want to put something together they have the opportunity to do it.

2150

What I've learned about economic development from living in northern Ontario is that there are a number of different ways to do economic development, but two basic things, two bigger areas we can speak about. There is the laissez-faire, which is that the major corporations can do what the hell they want. The problem with that is that all the decisions are made away from your community. If you have a large multinational corporation, they're bean-counting. They don't care what happens in Timmins or Iroquois Falls or Schumacher or Hearst or wherever it might be. They make decisions from afar. But if you're able to put control of those corporations into your community, it's much more effective in being able to make decisions that are good for your community. This was an opportunity to do so. That's what was so frustrating about that.

It's not to say, let's go to war against the multinationals. They are here and they are here to stay. They're pretty powerful people and we're not going to run them over pretty quick. But we need to find ways to put laws in place that allow people to take their investment, invest it in their home communities and do things themselves. I find more and more as we deal with economic development that it's getting tougher and tougher, because the large corporations, especially the multinationals, have figured out ways to corner the market in almost every sector.

Minister of Economic Development and Trade, you would remember because you're older than I am, but I remember, and I'm only 43. Both my parents were in small business. It was very easy back in the 1950s and 1960s for parents such as mine to say, "Listen, we want to go and invest and start up a business in our community." They did well. They raised a family. They made dollars for themselves. My father retired when he was 55 years old, back in the 1970s. Not too many people got the chance to do that back then. My mother retired when she was about 50 years old. They did well for themselves. They were successful small business people.

But when I look at the small business community today, not only in my community, but as I travel around Ontario, as other members in this Legislature do, the small business community is getting more and more squeezed by the big guy. How do you get into small business now? Not so much as independents any more as buying somebody's franchise so you can work for minimum wage for some other large corporation that can figure out how to make you work more for less and make bigger profits, and then less money stays in your community. We need to find ways to really give independent business people the kind of tools they need to invest in their community and the support they need to keep them going. Some of that has been done over the years—some by our government, some by yours—but there is a lot more room to do things there.

We need to take a look at the whole issue of how banks operate. The member from Welland-Thorold spoke earlier about banks and what happened to him. I'm no big fan of the major banks. I agree with you; some of the Conservative members are nodding with me in agreement. The major banks—my God, how many billions of dollars do those guys want to make in profit every year? If they're making the profit, that's fine, but I'd like to see some of that coming back into our communities.

You know what I'm talking about. I bet you're going to agree with me on this. Pick one of the major three banks which made over \$1 billion last year, and some poor individual in your community has got \$10,000, \$20,000 and they want to go out and start a business. They go to the bank manager. Knock, knock: "Hi, I've got a great idea, I've got energy, I've got talent, I've got the know-how and the will. I want to start up a business. I've got \$10,000, \$20,000 that I've taken out of my RRSPs—or equity from my home or the money I've put away for a holiday. I've been laid off and I want to start up a business." What does the bank say? Slam. "Don't call us, we'll call you. If you can't secure your loan by 100%, we don't want to talk to you." I see more and more hard-working people who are trying to get into business—trucking, the forestry business, retail—who are being turned away by the major banks.

What we need to do, and we have the power here in this House to do it, is to deal with the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, to take a look at how we can give them a few more tools so they can go out there and help do the kind of work that needs to be done in the banking sector through the credit union movement and through the caisses populaires movement so we're able to find ways to allow cash to get back into those communities so people can reinvest. Credit unions aren't there to make billions of dollars of profits; they're there for their members—unlike the banks, which are there for corporate greed. We've got to get the credit unions a bit more power so they can take some of this profit and put it back into our communities.

Yes, they'll lend to some higher-risk stuff, and some of those people will even go bankrupt. And yes, the credit union won't make billions of dollars of profit. You know how it works: For every 10 businesses that start up about six of them go bankrupt, and that's always been the case. That's how the economy goes. Somebody tries an idea: Four of them are able to run and survive past more than five years and they do well; for others who went down, it's not a total loss, as they've learned something. Most of them end up coming back at some other time with another business, gaining the experience they've had from their first failure. A lot of them go back and try something else. More importantly, those small, independent business people, when they're trying to put something up—even those who fail went into a stationery store and bought a desk and a calculator and an adding machine and a till. They had to buy furniture for their office. They had to do leasehold improvements on their store. That money stayed in our community. It's not a

total loss. So even if the credit union loses on some of them, in the end we get that money back because some other local business in our community makes a few bucks.

I would argue we also have to take a look at how we deal with pension funds, to use some of those dollars and reinvest them back in Ontario. For example, if we look at the money that is invested by way of the teachers' pension fund, the Ontario provincial service pension funds, the OMERS pension fund, just the ones that are under our control, it's literally billions of dollars. One of the things we should be looking at is how we could maybe direct a percentage of that money back into community economic development. We could say to those pension funds, "We, the government, are going to guarantee that if there's a loss, we'll make sure you don't lose your pensions." The argument I would make is, rather than us taking a holiday on making pension contributions, we should make our pension contributions as a government and as employers and invest some of that money back into our local communities. In the end, I think there are ways we can make that work and put dollars back into our communities.

As well, we can look at programs that used to exist, like the northern Ontario heritage fund and the Northern Ontario Development Corp, which were strictly, at that time, prior to five years ago, economic development tools. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, not under now-minister Palladini but under ministers previous to him, had economic development programs that helped individual business people, and, I would argue, some medium-sized, quasi-multinational corporations, to do some really interesting stuff when it came to economic development. Since the Harris government came to power, those programs are all gone. The government says that if the private sector can't do it on their own, it's not worth doing. Hogwash, Premier. The reality is that it's not as easy to attract investment from the car industry to places like where I come from, Timmins—because, by and large, a lot of the boom we're seeing in the Ontario economy is associated with the automobile industry. It's hard to attract automobile business in northern Ontario when it comes to parts manufacturing or production of vehicles. By and large, that will happen along the Highway 401 and Highway 400 area. So we need to find ways to develop other types of business opportunities in the north.

Governments before yours were doing some of that. One of the reasons the New Democrats were re-elected in the numbers we were in northern Ontario, and we keep getting re-elected, is because our government got that part right. Communities like Kapuskasing and Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay were able to invest in themselves. Go talk to the workers at Spruce Falls and Kapuskasing who make dividends from the shares they invested in their corporation—at that time Kimberly-Clark, now called Tembec. Go talk to the multitude of workers in Sault Ste Marie at Algoma Steel, at St Marys Paper, Algoma Central Railway. Go talk to the workers

in Thunder Bay at Thunder Bay paper. Go to Atikokan, go to Sturgeon Falls, next to the Premier's old riding. There were opportunities there where the provincial government, then the Bob Rae government, set up partnerships with workers and communities and local economic development funds to have the confidence to reinvest in themselves.

As well, we need to take a look at how we utilize other government programs for job creation. I would argue that one way to do that is by way of our welfare program. With workfare, the government is trying to accomplish something politically, saying: "We're tough on those welfare bums. We're going to force them all to go out and get a job, the bunch of lazy so-and-so's." The reality is that there are people in the welfare system who will try to abuse it—I'm not going to argue that—but they're certainly not the majority. I would argue that 95% of the people on welfare, given the opportunity, would want to work.

2200

If the government wants to do something positive by way of welfare, which they now call workfare, let's look at what we did under Jobs Ontario Training. Under Jobs Ontario we said, "We will help defray the cost of training that worker in exchange for your keeping the worker past the time of training." In my community alone, in the two years that program was there, it meant we created 650 jobs through Jobs Ontario Training. You can argue that program wasn't as successful as it should have been. Let's say I buy the argument. I think it was much more successful than most people realize, but I think we should look at that model because it was a successful model.

Maybe what we should do with welfare is, rather than having a workfare program that seems to be punitive, why don't we have a program that says, "All right, we will provide the training necessary to get the person back to work—not abstract training." We'll say to the worker or the unemployed person through welfare: "You go shopping around for a job. If you find somebody who is prepared to give you a job and you need some kind of training to get you into that job, or the employer says, 'I'm not willing to take the chance; I can't afford to pay you 12 or 14 bucks an hour to do this job while you're training,' we, through the welfare program, will subsidize your wage in some way so you're able to train on the job and be of some worth to the employer, so it's not entirely the cost of the worker."

I look at my own constituency office. I was in small business before as well. I take a look at the opportunities where I was the employer. It's very expensive to train a worker for the first time. If somebody walks through your door—look at your MPP offices. You just can't put somebody behind the desk or on the phone and say automatically they're going to be productive. It probably takes the better part of a year before those people really get to know what they're doing and be of real value to you as an MPP.

My argument is that if welfare people had an opportunity to go shopping around for a job and had

some sort of program that said to the employee, "I'll help defray the cost of training you, and deal with issues such as day care and clothing allowances if necessary," progressive steps, I would argue that would be a very progressive way to deal with the welfare system. Use those dollars and put them back to work directly in the economy.

I'll give you another idea, something I've thought about for a long time that is probably long overdue when it comes to programs in Ontario. We all love to hate workers' compensation; we all love to hate long-term disability plans, as employers; we all love to hate the Ontario disabilities program, as taxpayers. We all say: "Here are all these people on these disability programs. Are they really as disabled as they should be?" There's that whole argument that goes on.

But more importantly, there is almost a competition between those programs. You see it, as I do, in your constituency offices, when somebody comes in and says: "I'm hurt. I'm not able to work, or I'm not able to work to the degree that I used to." The Workers' Compensation Board says, "We see an injury but we don't think it's entirely an injury stemming from work, so therefore you're denied." So we waste all kinds of money arbitrating that particular issue and in the meantime the person goes on the Ontario disability program and they're made to apply for Canada pension, and if they were working for a former employer, maybe there's some LTD involved, and there's this competition among all the disability programs.

Why don't we move to one comprehensive disability program, and pass legislation in this House—in concert with the federal government later, if we're able to get that far—to say there will be one disability program in Ontario? Be damned if you're hurt at work, if you have a heart attack at home, if you're out playing baseball and you hurt your ankle or whatever it might be, we have one program that deals with the issue. Get rid of the duplication of the various programs and fold it under one. You have one program that's either very strongly regulated and administered by the private sector or it's publicly controlled. I would argue the latter, but I'm prepared to go to the other one and debate it if we ever do go there, to see what the possibilities are.

The idea would be that rather than the programs fighting among each other and employers putting in appeals and workers putting in appeals and the government putting in an appeal, everybody fighting among themselves to see how much we're not going to pay this individual, we would say: "Let's look at the facts. What did the doctors say?" The doctors in the system say, "This person broke a leg." They may not be able to work as a truck driver, if that's what their job was, because their right leg has been broken, but we've got something else we can get them to do for the employer by way of vocational rehab. Or maybe the person is not able to work at all, but we'd look at the medical situation and make a determination of what the person can or can't do and then say, "OK, we'll pay benefits for you to con-

valesce until you get back to work," or if you're not able to get back to your regular job because of your condition, we'd deal with the issues of training. Again, we'd deal not only with the issues of training, but day care and all those other areas that get in the way of somebody getting back to work.

Then you end up with a situation where, rather than competing among the various programs, we have one streamlined program that puts the dollars where they are most needed, that is, in supporting the sick or injured worker—person or persons—and being able to deal with that in such a way that they're able to get back into the workforce, or, if they're not able to work, we'd pension them and check on them every couple of years to see if things have changed.

I would argue that you can go by way of a comprehensive disability program to deal with some of this. One of the reasons we're not doing that is because there doesn't seem to be an appetite on the part of the provincial government. The government has the zeal to do all kinds of reforms like municipal restructuring and a whole bunch of others, but when it comes to doing the kinds of things that really would make a difference in people's lives and, I would argue, to the corporate sector as well, they don't seem to have an appetite to go in that direction.

I am amazed at how inept at times this government has been at being able to deal with how they administer their change. Just today I was speaking with, I think it was a Mrs Dubien; I may have the name wrong. But somebody called me at my constituency office this morning and said, "My daughter's husband left her." She was getting very little in the way of family support from her husband even though her husband worked and the situation was that the daughter had to go on welfare. The daughter said: "Listen, my husband has a responsibility. Why should the welfare system have to pay for me to the degree that it is?" So the daughter pushed the district welfare board to try to deal with the issue of getting a change order to deal with what actual support she should be getting. Eventually she got it done and her support went from \$200 to \$540-some-odd a month. The point is, there was a saving to the province of around \$300 a month, because as you know, if you get a support order such as that, they deduct it against your welfare.

The point Mrs Dubien was making was, why was it her daughter who had to force them to make this happen? Why is it that the welfare system itself didn't see the way to making sure that happened? It seems to us there's a saving to the province. If you want to save some dollars, there should have been a responsibility for the welfare system. Instead, her daughter had to pay a lawyer \$1,200 or so to be able to go out and do this.

I called back, and I wanted to check with the welfare department what was going on. They told me that in their zeal to deal with all the welfare reforms, this is one part of the package that didn't get parcelled out at the right time. They didn't have their support workers in place in time to be able to deal with this particular woman. There

was a period of around six months, if you fell into the system when the government transferred over all of the responsibility for welfare, that not all of it was really all worked out. My argument would have been is that what they should have done was figure out what had to be done and then make the transition so that nobody fell between the cracks. In this particular case, because it was improperly unfolded and implemented, this woman was made to pay. If it had been before or if it had been after the system would have paid, but this woman paid \$1,200 to have the provincial government save money. I think that when the government goes ahead and makes these kind of changes—

Interjection.

Mr Bisson: Yes, it's about 10 after 10. I take it the Minister of Transportation wanted to know the time and I just let him know what time it was.

I also want to make one other point. I was looking through the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review the other day and there's one point that I want to make because I think it's a very interesting point in their budget document. The government, with great fanfare, talks about how well they've done as far as revenue and how well they've done as far as dealing with the debt is concerned, and they want to talk about taxation and the tax rebate that they've given people by way of the 30% reduction in income tax. I was going through the budget document and I thought this was quite an interesting number when you take a look at it, if I'm able to find it in time. The copy I was reading from was a French copy; I now have an English one in front of me and it is laid out a little bit differently. Here it is; I've got it right here on page 55. It's quite interesting.

If we take a look at the revenue that came into the province of Ontario—and the government says that because of the tax cut all of Canada did well. The Canadian economy boomed because of the Mike Harris tax cuts. Not only did the Canadian economy boom, the argument from the Conservatives is that the American economy boomed along. The power of the Ontario economy—it's amazing. Ontario is such a powerful place in North America that when the government gave a 30% tax cut in Ontario, the American economy bounded up, the Canadian economy bounded, all of North America participated in the tax cut of Mike Harris and, wow, the economy shot up.

I was in Hearst on Friday and I was as pleased as punch to sit down to watch both CNN in the States and Newsworld in Canada talk about the unemployment figures and about how unemployment has gone down. We know the whole North American economy can be thankful for the 30% tax cut. It was all their doing.

2210

I listened to the former Minister of Municipal Affairs and all the Conservatives take a bow. My God, it's amazing. Who would have known that a 30% tax cut in Ontario would affect all of the northern North American economy? In fact, I hear some overseas in Europe thank Mike Harris for his tax cut because they're saying that

even in Europe—in France, Spain, England, Germany, Italy—they're doing great. It's all because of the 30% tax cut. It's an interesting argument that the government puts forward.

That's basically what they say. They say, "Our tax cut was the economic boom for North America." I've got to believe them. I look at the numbers; why shouldn't I believe them?

Anyway, here's the interesting point. We look at the economic indicators as far as revenue that came into the province of Ontario is concerned and, because of the economic activity, provincial income tax was up last year, right? There was \$17 billion of income tax last year compared to \$16 billion the year before. Retail sales tax in 1997-98 was \$10.8 billion; this year it's \$11.6 billion. You look at the numbers and say, "Mike Harris, wow." I'm telling you, it's just amazing what that tax cut did.

Then I look at the bottom and it says "miscellaneous revenues." This is all the user fees and stuff charged to people. I'm not talking Ontario Lottery Corp, the liquor board or any of that. I'm just talking vehicle and drivers' registration fees, all kinds of fees, licenses, royalties, sales and rentals, and all those kinds of things that go on within the province of Ontario. A good part of this is user fees.

There was \$3.4 billion in user fees in 1995; \$5.6 billion today. Interesting—over \$2 billion. The government will have us believe that there has been no cost of the tax increase. Well, I look just over here and we have increased our user fee collection in Ontario by over \$2 billion just on the provincial share, just on the provincial books.

This doesn't take into account the user fees charged by municipalities. We know there was a whole schedule of user fees that were put forward by the Ontario government back about four years ago—the types of things that municipalities were given the ability to charge user fees on that they couldn't before. So when your child or my kids go to the arena or they use the roller rink or any municipal complex, swimming pool, whatever it is, they pay more. When we use our roads—it's all of it. It's all much higher as far as user fees, and that's just municipalities.

Then you walk into the Ontario hospital system and hospitals are charging you more user fees. You are paying now for things like crutches, whereas in some hospitals you never paid before. You're paying for treatments that you never had to pay for before, and other user fees that the government has put onto the hospital sector.

You take a look in education: user fees. Look at what's happened to tuitions. I have a young daughter—she's a young woman now. She's finished three years of college as a nurse. She managed to graduate from George Brown College with honours and works as a nurse at St Michael's Hospital in the cardiac step-down unit. I'm very proud of her. She decided to go back to Ryerson Polytechnic University this year, and work at the same time, to get her B.Sc in nursing. Do you realize how

much more we pay for tuition fees this year than we did compared to last year and the years before? I've seen it go up year after year.

I'm lucky, because I can afford to pay it. I'm one of those fortunate parents who has the ways and means to help my daughter along and am able to help her go to college and university. She has managed to do a lot herself. I've got to give Julie full credit because I think she paid all but about \$1,000 of her tuition this year. I'm very proud of my daughter for doing that.

The point is we're a lucky family. I'm employed; we've done well over the years. We're not rich but we can make ends meet and we're able to pay those tuition fees to help our daughter along.

How many families, how many sons and daughters across the province can't do the same because their parents aren't as fortunate as you and I to be able to afford to pay those user fees?

So yes, there has been a tax cut. The Conservatives argue the North American economy has benefited as a result of the 30% tax cut, but there are a lot of people in the province of Ontario, including my daughter and probably your sons and daughters, who are paying more in the way of tuition fees and user fees. Grandparents and parents alike are paying user fees in the health care system since the Mike Harris government has come to power.

We can try to cut it whatever way we want but, in the end, I come back to one thing I heard in this House five or six years ago. Remember, member from Renfrew, what Michael Harris, the then-leader of the third party, said about user fees? He said, "A tax is a tax is a tax." He got up in this House time after time and talked about how user fees were taxes.

If it was a tax for Mike Harris prior to 1995, I guess all these \$2 billion in user fees charged by the province—additional over last year—and all the user fees we're paying in municipal services and all the user fees we're paying to use highway 407 and the health care system and education—We all have to pay higher taxes because of Mike Harris and all the things he's done to Ontario when it comes to paying for his phony tax cut.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It's interesting to follow a speaker like we've just heard and the one before him. They're just so enthused about this great province we live in. I've had the privilege tonight to listen to one Chicken Little over here and another Chicken Little over there. If you don't know that story, you should go and read it. I've never heard as much doom and gloom. We have one person over here suggesting that everybody in this province is a crook. The one over there must live in a silo, because he doesn't know what the economy is doing in this province.

Tonight I'd like to talk for a few minutes about health care, which goes hand in hand with restructuring. I want to suggest to you that it wasn't our government, over the last number of years, that closed 12,000 beds as did the Liberals and the NDP. Fact: They closed 12,000 beds in this province.

It is interesting to note that in Peterborough, the town I live in, the Liberals closed the emergency ward at St Joseph's hospital. I can remember having a meeting with, I believe, Mrs Grier. I think she was Minister of Health under the NDP at the time. She told us, in the basement of the library, "No problem with health care, none whatsoever, lots of doctors, lots of nurses." The only problem is that she forgot to tell us she went to the United States to get her health care, which left me a bit concerned.

I look at the \$20 billion plus we've been spending in this province. If you read some of the statistics, that could double—

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just listened to the member talk about the former member, Mrs Grier, getting her health care services in the United States. The question I have is: Is he obliged to tell the truth when he speaks in this House?

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr Bisson: I just asked the question on the point of order. Withdraw what?

The Acting Speaker: There was motive imputed.

Mr Bisson: I withdraw if I insulted. I just asked if he had to tell the truth. That's all I asked.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member withdraw now?

Mr Bisson: OK.

Mr Stewart: I take it from where it comes from. I usually leave that type of conduct alone, because although I class many people in this House as honourable, I do have difficulty with those kinds of comments and then turn around and expect to call a person honourable.

I look at what this government is doing in health care and the amount of dollars that are being spent, some \$20 billion plus this year, as I suggested to you. The possibility, forecast within the next 10 years, that it could double or quadruple, is a very concerning situation to me. Will we have that type of money to put into health care?

2220

I suggest that what we should be doing—and I think it's what we're doing now—is concentrating on quality but looking at efficiencies within the system. You do it in any other business, so I don't know why you wouldn't do it here. I don't believe in throwing money at a problem, as other governments have in the past. When the money is gone, the problem is still there. That's one thing that happened in my area, whether it be in education, health care, whatever. You must assess, look at the problem and then react accordingly.

Out of that, I guess, has come the restructuring of the health care system in my community. I just want to comment that since 1995, in Peterborough, there has been a \$46.8-million increase in health care funding. That does not include new long-term care beds, 233. It also does not include the existing long-term care beds that are going to be refurbished to the tune of 451.

The other thing that has happened, certainly in my municipality, is the new dialysis service that was put into effect in the spring of the second year of our mandate. They had been trying to get a dialysis unit in Peterborough for 15 years, and it was our government that put that service in. It has been well received, and recently we expanded it by another seven units.

Also, we now have a new cardiac care lab, something that Dr Hughes and many people in the community have wanted for some 12 years. We announced it last fall, and about two weeks ago we announced that the new funding is in place for both operational and capital. I want to offer publicly very sincere thanks to every person in our community as well as some surrounding communities who went out and raised in excess of \$2 million as a very good start on the capitalization of this unit. Also last year, we announced and recommended a new MRI unit. They have been trying to get that for the last 8 to 10 years.

What we've been doing in that area is working in old facilities. We have a hospital that was built in 1947, and there are some major problems with it. But certainly the ministry has been trying to work with them to make sure that what will be proposed down the way will offer good, quality health care.

I constantly hear people talking about health care in this province. I want to say publicly that I believe the health care workers in this province are second to none. They do not get the type of credit they should, and I would like to congratulate them.

In our case, the hospital restructuring committee came and offered a suggestion of a renovated facility, to the tune of \$56 million. They have done two additional proposals: a totally renovated unit for \$140 million and a new unit for \$183 million. With the bill that was debated today, we are going to have the opportunity and the flexibility to deal with the ministry and to look at the best way to make sure we have quality health care in Peterborough.

Yes, the restructuring committee supported the closing of one facility, concentrating on the new Peterborough regional health care centre. It's working well, and they are way ahead of their time because they've been amalgamating. They have agreed, and have for some time, on one administration, one chief of staff, one governance model, etc. I want to compliment them on that.

Some of the legislation going through now will allow the administration and the boards to look at getting a facility that will offer Peterborough and the region the best possible health care available.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to join the debate tonight for concurrence in supply, and there are three votes that I want to concern myself with. The first is the vote on concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; secondly, for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs; thirdly, for the Office of the Premier.

I'm going to try, given the lateness of the hour, to touch very directly on one or two issues per vote, because

I know colleagues here have some additional remarks they wish to offer.

Let me start with the Ministry of Agriculture. It is a reality that we are in a new Legislature with the lowest rural representation ever in the history of post-Confederation Ontario. That is to some degree a reflection of changing demographics, but it is also a reality that the most recent electoral boundaries changes brought about in the previous Legislature paid little or no regard to the rural aspect of Ontario. So we have this week a rising tide of concern in much of rural Ontario about the latest round of cuts made to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I simply want to make a couple of points. I was home on the weekend, and I know all of my colleagues were as well. In rural Ontario, if you were at an agricultural event this past weekend, you were undoubtedly approached by some farmer, somebody in agribusiness or some municipal politician who wanted to know what the latest was on these budget cuts.

I don't know whether I should be competing with some of the chatter behind me; it is just a little difficult.

I certainly was approached a number of times this weekend about what the cuts meant to Renfrew. In Renfrew we have lost our ag rep and we are losing one other position, and some new position of information officer is going to be provided. But there is a significant evisceration of the field and extension services of the Ministry of Agriculture.

It's too bad that my friend from Oxford is not here tonight, because if the minister were here to speak to the concurrence in supply for his estimates, I would have this question for him: Minister, it is never easy doing Her Majesty's business, particularly at treasury board. Not for the first time has a Minister of Agriculture been undressed at treasury board, most recently to the tune of \$5.5 million, or \$8.7 million, if you include the cuts to the University of Guelph. But, as was made plain in the ministry document of last week, and I have in my hand as well the analysis of those cuts from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, what do we find? We find the cuts are very much in the field services. Hard to believe, I say to this House, that we're eliminating the position of ag rep. That's been the core position within the ministry field service for decades. That position is now being eliminated; it's being declared surplus.

2230

The question I would have for our friend from Oxford if he were here tonight: We know what you've done. We know the positions that have been eliminated at the front line, scores of positions, millions of dollars of budget. How many head office positions have been declared surplus? How many directors? How many ADMs? How many communications personnel have been shed at head office? I doubt it's a very long list. Oh, I'm sure there will be a token one or two, but I would simply put the question tonight, and I will be pursuing it, because the farmers—and which of the farmers will be hurt by these cuts? Not the big boys and girls; they'll do just fine. It

will be the small and medium-sized farmers in Renfrew, in Wellington, in Niagara, in Stormont, in Leeds, in Huron, in Grey-Bruce. Those are the people who are going to be left with a reduced service. Oh yes, they'll have the 1-800 number, and they'll have some fancy computer hookup to God knows what, but they're not going to have those extension people and they're not going to have the ag reps in their communities.

I think the Ontario Federation of Agriculture makes a very powerful argument when it observes that we have gutted the core of the ministry's field services, those services that have given this department the kind of credibility and the kind of connection it has had in rural Ontario since the establishment of the department a long time ago.

In the absence of the minister, who I am sure is doing important work elsewhere, my question remains: How many head office people, how many communications experts, how many pollsters, how many public opinion survey artists have been shed in this latest round of cuts?

Mr Bradley: They all got a raise.

Mr Conway: My friend Bradley says, "They all got a raise." I'm not so sure they got a raise, but I am sure that they have been protected and they have been mollycoddled in a way that will not expose them to the job losses and the uncertainties that a lot of these other front-line Ministry of Agriculture people are going to experience.

The second point I wanted to raise tonight concerns the supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Later this week we are going to embark on a debate about restructuring municipal government in at least five communities across Ontario: the national capital area, Haldimand-Norfolk, greater Sudbury, Metropolitan Toronto and Hamilton-Wentworth. I'm not going to spend a lot of time tonight speaking to the specifics of the legislation that was introduced today except to make the following observations. I don't mean to be mischievous about this because, quite frankly, I think it is well known that where a person stands with respect to local government reform to some degree is explained by where the person stands geographically. I live in Pembroke. I do not have the direct involvement that someone from Stoney Creek might have in these proposals. People in Ancaster and people in Hamilton will probably not have precisely the same point of view. People in Rockcliffe Park and people in the Glebe, I suspect, are going to have a different take on aspects of the Ottawa bill.

But I want to say this: There was a lot of fire and thunder here this afternoon about who said what and when. I can just speak for the eastern region. People were very guarded, by and large, in the electoral campaign that concluded on June 3. Why were they guarded? Does anyone here think that any candidates for the major parties would get elected in Nepean if they had offered one city? I'm not saying they wouldn't have gotten elected, but I think it would have been a very close call. I note with some interest where the successful candidates

in Carleton-Gloucester and Nepean-Carleton stood, and I don't quarrel with that. They are shrewd people who know their communities a lot better than I. But I would say to the now absent member from Nipissing, I watched carefully the Ottawa debate over the course of May and June. I know what people said and what they didn't commit to. I know what was generally offered to the general electorate. I simply say that if the package of proposals that was introduced here today had been advertised with any clarity and any regularity around seven or eight of the electoral districts that make up much of the area affected by this legislation, I suspect we would have a different parliamentary cohort than we have in the persons of Skarica and Baird, and others from other parties, I might add, as well.

I say this very seriously, because again we're going to be encouraged to talk about accountability and candour and consistency—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: We have a budding orator from Scarborough, and I'm sure he would want to get into the debate. He has been absent, for whatever reason, these past few weeks.

There was a general election and people were asked their opinions. I simply make the point that now some heroic virtue and some clarity is being offered in the name of the collective that I can tell you was not there in Cumberland and in Gloucester and in Nepean just a few short months ago.

More importantly, we are going to be looking at a set of proposals that continues the argument that I find deeply offensive: that is, that politicians are, *a priori*, bad. I will say that the current government, in its tone and in its rhetoric, in this respect I find to be deeply offensive. I understand the popularity of the offering, and I understand that to every season there is a special quality. I'm not so disconnected from popular enthusiasm not to understand that anything that denigrates, that depreciates, that undermines and that laughs at the political class is popular these days. I just hope we all understand where that road leads.

I am not here to argue that local government cannot and should not be revised from time to time. As I said earlier today, I take some interest in the fact that in the case of Haldimand-Norfolk we will, in these last hours of the millennium, in our genius, correct the genius of a previous generation. They thought they had it right. John White and company thought they had the alpha and omega of correct municipal design a quarter century ago when they constructed that aberration that we have known as the regional municipality of Haldimand-Norfolk.

It is interesting as well, in my part of eastern Ontario, the Davis government—I suppose it was actually the Robarts government that constructed the regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton. Let me tell you, there were a lot of bright people associated with that exercise. They were very confident that they had the problems

isolated and the corrective design very much in that legislation of 1969.

I said to someone the other day that I happened to be re-reading Lord Durham's wonderful report about the state of the province of Canada in 1838. Durham of course was a commissioner of his own, "Radical Jack," sent out to see what the problem was. The interesting thing about Durham was that he was absolutely right in his analysis of the problem. There was a serious problem with local government in the Canadas in 1837-38. But as he was correct in his analysis of the problem, he was equally wrong in his recommended solution. His legislative union was absolutely unworkable, and 25 years later the fathers met in several conferences and corrected that mistake in something that we call Confederation.

But the design of local government is a design that to some real extent is going to have to take into account local conditions and local expectations. I simply want to say that when I hear the debate overwhelmingly focused on getting rid of politicians, I have to ask myself the question, why that focus and not other things that I suspect people I know who live in those communities might like to see dealt with?

It is interesting for anyone who cares to read in the Ottawa Citizen a supplement published just a few days ago called *A City of Villages*. It's quite an interesting four-page supplement on local government restructuring, with a primary focus on the national capital area. What the Citizen, which has editorially very strongly supported the Harris government's plan for one city government, tells us is that there should be little or no expectation that there is going to be a great savings at least in the short and intermediate term.

2240

There is a very interesting article in this supplement where the paper is interviewing Gardner Church. I'm not going to read chapter and verse of the article except to say that Mr Church, who was the architect of restructuring in Kingston, makes a number of very interesting and salient points about the lessons learned in Kingston restructuring. He makes plain the argument that it is not likely there are going to be any significant savings. If the savings are going to be effected, it is going to be a matter of public policy choice directed by the provincial government.

In my more mischievous moments, when I look at Ottawa-Carleton, for example, or the regional municipality of Metropolitan Toronto—I guess we don't call it that any more—I have one little benchmark that I would like to recommend. It would be simply this: I'd like to see an analysis of the unit cost of police services in the greater Toronto area over the last 10 years. I would like to see the same analysis in Ottawa-Carleton. And I wonder how much the unit price of policing has declined. I listened to the budget chief in Metropolitan Toronto and he appears to be becoming more and more frantic about the rising tide of expenditure on that very large appropriation of the public's money.

We are told routinely that if you make it bigger, it will necessarily be more efficient and the unit cost will stabilize and almost certainly drop. What was our experience when we went to divisional school boards? What was the experience actually when we went to the larger units of local government 25 or 30 years ago? I'm not saying there were not benefits, but I think the analysis, and Gardner Church would certainly seem to support this, confirms one thing: The price of virtually everything went up. So now, yet again, in the triumph of hope over experience, we march down the road embracing enthusiastically the notion, let us make the units of local government as large as possible and let us make the number of elected officials as few as possible.

Earlier tonight I was thumbing through some of the classical texts about representation in democratic society. One of my favourites on this subject is James Madison, one of the principal architects of the federal Constitution penned at Philadelphia in 1787. Madison and many of his Virginian friends felt very strongly that if there was going to be true democratic and republican governments—small-r republican—it was absolutely essential for the efficacy and for the integrity and for the durability of that government to be as close to the people as possible. They were not alone in the embrace of that basic value.

We have had over a long period of time in this Upper Canada, now Ontario, of ours I think, relatively speaking, very healthy and vibrant local government. One of the reasons it's been healthy and vibrant, I would submit to you, is because it has been local. The Baldwin Act of 1849 created a framework which, with much adjustment over the intervening century and a half, has served us well. I simply make the point for those people who want to be rid of the politicians, is it because what they want is an increase in the non-elected lobbyists?

Again the mischievous part of me wants to ask school boards and hospitals and a variety of other public and parapublic agencies, "How much are you spending these days on consulting fees and lobbying fees?" Making very substantial investments are a number of hospitals and other agencies which in an earlier age would've expected their member of the Legislature, whether that person was named Ecker or Arnott or Bradley or Bisson, to have been their man or woman at court.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): And they do.

Mr Conway: And they do.

But in fact they are doing less of the business because more and more of the business, according to the evidence, is being done by the unelected lobbyists pulling strings and funding God knows what behind the curtain of public view and public accountability.

The New York Times a few months ago ran a series of articles about what was going on on K Street, home of the Washington lobbying industry. Good old Upper Canadians might like to think that's Washington and we are just so much more pure than that. Well, I have eyes and I have ears and I must say that what I am seeing and

what I am hearing in recent years makes me think that K Street has come, big time, not just to Toronto but also to Ottawa and to other of the major provincial capitals.

That's the argument. I think that's a very fundamental part of the argument that informs this government's local government reform. Get rid of the locally elected politicians so you can open the door to the kind of wire-pulling and manipulation that these paid lobbyists are so very good at effecting for a fee behind closed doors. Someone once said that the government of Canada that was created in the middle of the last century was government of the people by lawyers for big business. I wonder how far we've come from that view of the truth.

The final point, because I'm told that my time is quickly waning, has to do with the Office of the Premier. Here I want to be a little critical, I suppose, of all of us. I must say I found the House today particularly unedifying. I am beginning to wonder why so many estimable men and women will put so much of their hearts and souls, their families, their property, their security on the line to come to this place.

I read in the Ottawa Citizen the other day that Peter Dobell and his parliamentary study group have done a big survey of federal members of Parliament. Do you know what they're reporting as the number one stress in the lives of MPs? According to the Dobell group as reported in the Citizen last week, they've got no power. They are without any influence. That is largely true in the provincial legislatures. I would say it is probably even more true in the provincial legislatures.

The University of Toronto Press has just published a book called *Governing from the Centre* by an eminent political scientist named Donald Savoie. What's his thesis? The thesis is very simple, Savoie says from both academic and practical experience inside the upper echelons of the federal government. Thirty years ago Pierre Trudeau said to Canada, "Your MPs are nobodies 50 feet from Parliament Hill." He says, does Savoie, that in 1999, 75% of the cabinet ministers are nobodies at the cabinet table. I won't bother to tell you what he tells readers as to the legitimacy of Parliament.

I'll take my seat, I say to the ever-worried look of my whip from Hamilton East, but not before I ask another question: Why do we bother? Bradley was roaring today, somewhat disconsolately, about how impotent this place has been, and he's right. To be fair it's not totally a criticism of the current government because it has been a trend that has been accelerating over the last number of years.

We vote tonight concurrence in the Office of the Premier. We have an imperial presidency here. We have an elected dictatorship here. We have no countervailing force of any kind. I'm soon going to move a motion to reduce all expenditures to the whole charade of parliamentary councils and parliaments because it's almost an embarrassment.

Do we ever intend to do anything about this as honourable men and women who worked so hard and fought

so long to get elected, to get nominated, to get re-elected, to get renominated?

Mr O'Toole: We could have passed these hours ago.
2250

Mr Conway: Well, I say to my friend from Durham who's busily signing his Christmas cards, if you were a student and you were sitting in this chamber over the last number of days, you would rightly conclude that the most pressing business before the members of the Ontario Legislature this December week was signing Christmas cards. That's offered to everybody.

The Office of the Premier has gotten larger, its resources have become more significant, its power has become more unchecked, its impatience has become more manifest; and this Parliament, this Assembly, says to every increasing abuse and indecency: "Ready, aye, ready. Give us more abuse, not less."

Can any self-respecting citizen ask, what could be reasonably expected from this so-called parliamentary place if this attitude, this pathetically, transparently supine attitude for this and other legislatures and parliaments around this country continues? I want to say, particularly to you younger and newer members of this place, "Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it will toll for you and your legitimacy."

Mr O'Toole: I'll just be brief, but I did want to respond to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke with respect to the concurrence tonight. There were two areas specifically that I wanted to mention. In my riding of Durham, there was the closure of an agricultural access point. I have spoken with many of the farm business people in the community and it will constitute a change. I think, for the most part, they are able to cope with it. But I do want to leave on the record clearly that the expenditures when we came to office—I'm looking at the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review here—in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs was \$263 million. With the outlook in 1999, that expenditure is \$367 million, in-year change of about \$40 million.

Clearly Minister Hardeman, when speaking with him some time earlier on this change, said that they consulted with the farmers of Ontario, not just the Federation of Agriculture but the group referred to as the Farmers of Ontario, and they wanted the ministry to refocus. The ministry has listened and re-utilized those resources within the ministry. So there is a change. There's no question of that change, but it's addressing the changes in agriculture itself—the environmental issues, sustainability in the environment, technology research and the supports, and the supports in themselves are to some extent electronic. But I do want to leave that on the record.

As we are discussing concurrence as well, if you want to take a general statement about where the government has been and what is actually going on, I think it's important for the viewer to recognize that taxes are down, and with that statement of taxes being down, revenue is

up. In-year revenue for the current fiscal year is up almost \$1 billion.

I heard Mr Bisson speaking earlier—and the revenue itself, the change and explanation of the revenue is that more people are working. More people are working, so more people are spending. I can demonstrate for you that the total revenue increase is attributed primarily to personal income tax, which is an in-year change of \$400 million. Clearly, that's more people working, more people paying their share, as opposed to collecting or being on assistance of some sort.

A further increase in retail sales tax—that's our tax revenue on transactions of purchase—\$350 million of an in-year change.

When you couple all this together, this government has reduced taxes, made efficient changes in spending and increased revenue. They've also, I might add, increased the expenditure side of the picture. When we came to government, you would know, the budget was something in the order of \$56 billion. Now, whether this is a proud type of statement or not, it's in the order of \$59 billion. I think it's having a healthy economy so that you can afford to have a good educational system and a good health care system, as well as a strong agricultural sector in our economy.

Because the members tonight are a little impatient to go home, I will relinquish the time and be pleased to complete my statements with that.

Mr Bradley: I'm told that people want to go home tonight. I'm told that even though this House sits until midnight everybody wants to rush out of this place. Well, I'm here to debate things, I'm elected to debate things, not to rush out before the House is supposed to. I take full responsibility for any criticism. I'm the one who's going to take all the flak. I don't care about that. I'm told this is a House leaders' agreement or something, which I won't comment on. I think we have precious few opportunities to discuss certain issues in this House; this is an opportunity to do so. This House did not sit, except for seven days, until we came back very late in October. There was no opportunity at that time. I might say, if anybody wants to go home, let them go home. I will not prevent anybody from going home. If they abandon the House, that's fine. I think there are some important issues that must be canvassed in this House.

First of all, we're going to have a bill called "restructuring" before this House. One bill—we will not have an opportunity to comment on each one of those individual situations—we'll have one bill to deal with it. Now, if that precedent is allowed to stand by the Speaker, I can tell you the next will be Waterloo and Niagara and Durham and Peel and wherever else that will be thrown into one bill. To me, that is simply not acceptable.

I thought the member for Renfrew-Pembroke-Nipissing made an outstanding speech with some historical references on the importance of democracy. Every time we allow more so-called efficiency in this House, for the sake of efficiency, democracy is diminished a little more.

If we see this restructuring across the province, if we see the imposition in my area—I won't speak to the areas in the bill until the bill is there, if I get an opportunity at all to speak then—I want to tell you that in Niagara I do not want to see one big city imposed. I believe that what is operating now, with some modifications, can work quite nicely.

What we're seeing happening is local politicians falling over themselves trying to do the government's work. Why? Because they see the example of Toronto, where you say to Toronto: "Well, you have a choice: It's either 44 members or 22 members. Choose your poison: hemlock or arsenic. What are you going to take?" Of course, they're forced to take that. So you've intimidated a lot of people at the local level in terms of your restructuring.

You're going to see, if you allow in Niagara one big city, nothing but the wealthiest people getting elected, because the campaigns will cost a lot of money. You will also see party politics, on an official basis, coming forward to be an important part of politics at the local level. One of the things that we've had, which has been compelling about the local level, which has been good about our local level of government, is that by and large, even though people may have a political label, they have often checked that label at the door in an effort to bring forward the best government for that area.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke also mentioned how easily these people can be lobbied. If you think for one moment that if you slam 14 members or 16 members into Niagara, somehow you're going to have access to them, you're wrong. What we have now are elected taxpayers. I think it's an important word to use, "elected" taxpayers. These are part-time people who agree to serve on agencies, boards and commissions, in this case, an elected local government. Those individuals now represent us in the manner in which they should.

What we have now is a situation where some of the local people are scrambling, and some of the others must have seen that, saying, "Well, we'd better amputate ourselves at the knee, otherwise Mike Harris will amputate us at the hip." I'm suggesting that we don't need an amputation at all.

Another problem was raised in the House the other day by Mr Guzzo, who asked an excellent question to the Minister of Energy, and that is about your local Hydro commission. The neo-cons and some who are desperate for money locally, want to take a public service, a basic public service such as the provision of hydroelectric power, or power generated in any other way, and they want to be able to now charge a huge rate. There are two reasons for that. If they charge a huge rate, then they can sell it off and have all kinds of money to spend and say they're not going to raise local taxes.

2300

I can tell you that individual people, senior citizens, people of modest income, businesses, industry are going to recoil at the fact that there is a suggestion there is

going to be something of a massive increase in hydro rates.

I think if the people of St Catharines knew what was going on, if they were aware of the decision that could be made this evening, they would be up in arms to know that their hydro rates, their electricity rates could go extremely high just to make it a profitable company.

Should General Motors, Ford and Chrysler and so on make money? Yes. That is the private sector. There are many, many areas which represent the private sector. The provision of basic services such as water, sewers and hydroelectric power should be available to people at cost. That's what Ontario Hydro was supposed to provide when it was established. It was supposed to provide that kind of service at cost.

Members will have noticed from my cough that I have contracted what so many others have. I also want to dwell on—my friend the member for Oshawa is here. He smiles. He is a star. I've made him famous by mentioning he's a star in the National Rifle Association commercial that appears on—is it TNN?

Interjection: CNN.

Interjection: ESPN.

Mr Bradley: No, I think it's the Tennessee network or something like that. It's a country network, it appears. I'm told it's 6:30 on Sunday morning or something, so it would have to be somebody either coming in or getting up early who would see it, but I know he has been a star there as well as other places, and that is yet another matter.

My colleague the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke pointed out appropriately how destructive it is of the system to constantly denigrate the people who are elected representatives, elected taxpayers. In our case it's people who, on a full-time basis, serve the people in their constituencies.

I know it's popular on the right-wing talk shows, and I know it's popular with a certain crowd that will wildly applaud when you say "fewer politicians." What it really means is fewer elected representatives to reflect their point of view.

In each of our communities we have, or have had in the past, a local council. That council is usually a good cross-section of the community. If you have one huge regional council, one huge megacity in all of these various communities around the province, you're going to lose that. You do the profession, the democratic system, no favour when you play into the hands of those Reform Party types who talk about fewer politicians.

They do change their minds from time to time once they're in office, about some of the perks that are available, but I want to say that we do ourselves no favour when we do that. We denigrate local government. I must say the Progressive Conservative Party over the years has been a political party which in the days of Premier Frost, Premier Robarts and Premier Davis respected local government, particularly the first two of those individuals. I don't think we gain anything with that.

What this debate allows us an opportunity to do is to canvas some issues which are important to people. We can't all get on question period. We can't all get on with statements. We can't all get on with a speech on an individual thing.

I say, with the Minister of Transportation here this evening, that there's a great concern, for instance, with the licensing system. More young people are failing these driver's tests for some reason. When I compare them to the driver's tests that were available 30 and 40 years ago, they're much tougher.

These people have been placed in real jeopardy now by the fact that they're unable to obtain their licence. They've gone through far more than most of us in this House had to go through when we obtained our driving licences. That is something that has to be addressed. The minister talked about adding some funds for that purpose. That has not solved the problem by any means to this point in time.

There are people who are concerned about road safety, about the fact that we have so many trucks on the highways now. In this case I think I'll join my provincial colleagues in saying it's incumbent upon the federal government to provide the necessary funding to ensure that we have a viable rail service, that is, for both freight and passengers. I invite all to join with me in urging them to do so. That's their role and responsibility. I don't think their role and responsibility is particularly in roads, but we have a very good case to make for them in the field of providing the alternatives so our roads are better, that is, particularly rail and shipping.

There is some merit perhaps in putting the miles per hour, as I still call it, or kilometres per hour that one can travel—I can recall when at one time it was 65 or 60 for cars, 55 for trucks. There may be some merit to that because we have a real problem on the highway with the number of trucks and the number of individuals who are intimidated by them. We still have some excellent drivers out there in the trucking industry—they're top-notch people—but once it got deregulated, there are a lot more people out there hustling because there's great pressure on them for a variety of reasons.

I want to deal as well with the issue of the general development problems we have in this province. In fact, we're seeing unfettered development right across this province. Much of the agricultural land, which was so beneficial to all of our backgrounds, to all of our areas, is disappearing quickly. I remember when Stephen Lewis, back in 1975 or 1976, had a calculation of how many acres were being lost per hour. I would suggest that we're seeing as many of those acres disappearing today and we're now threatening one of the real gems we have, the Niagara Escarpment.

We have as well a withdrawal of funds—because the Ministry of the Environment is one of the concurrences—from the Ministry of the Environment, which is not enabling it to do its job appropriately. One third of the budget was cut; about 42% of the staff were cut. We have a problem in Sarnia with a leaking dump, a dump

which was allowed to be extended without a full environmental assessment, and the chickens have come home to roost there. One wonders whether there are going to be charges laid in that particular case.

I listened to lectures about saving money from a government which spent \$100 million on self-serving government advertising. I know a lot of the whiz kids thought that was really clever. "We got away with it," you said, and: "Isn't that great? See, we won the election." Would you win the election without it? I don't know that. I can't make that judgement, to be fair. But I can tell you that when you make that kind of commitment of \$100 million, you skew the election in favour of the governing party. That is patently unfair. The Provincial Auditor made reference to his great concern about that. You see, it's no use even talking to most of you people, because I've never seen a House like this, to be honest with you. If you look at the government members in the Davis administration, a lot of them were independent-thinking people. They didn't simply throw the same old answers back at you; they understood that was the case. I'm not looking at the member for Oshawa in this case. I'm just saying it's so discouraging to hear how some people are either simply purveying the propaganda—and if they are, I guess that's one thing, but they seem to believe the propaganda that they purvey. It's very difficult to be in a dialogue. It's like, the committee system used to work so well because people checked their partisan hat at the door. We had some excellent work done. I'm sure if the member for Waterloo-Wellington would consult with his predecessor, he would tell you. In the days of his predecessor, there was a lot of good work done by committees. It is incumbent upon all of us, regardless of our political stripe, to try to check those hats at the door and get positive work done in a committee. But if all we're going to get is the usual government line on every case, I go to my friend Conway and say: "What is the purpose of being here? We're just going through the motions when we go here, because the government will do exactly what it wants to do." That's most unfortunate.

2310

I can remember a former Minister of Energy who was in the Hydro committee, Jim Taylor—a very right-wing member of the caucus, for his day. Jim Taylor was a person who took the opposite point of view from others within his own party.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Durham.

Mr Bradley: He made the Hydro committee an interesting place. He had been an energy minister. He had been, as he said, mugged in the hallways of power, or words to that effect, and lost that position. But he had an inside knowledge of how the system worked and he was an outstanding member of a committee. There were a number of those people who worked extremely well in those particular days.

I look at my municipalities and see how they struggle today with the costs of downloading. The local business

types are whipped up by the right wing and they're told, "You know, the real problem is your local government." It isn't your local government. The real problem is the downloading by the provincial government onto the municipalities, in the case of Niagara by some \$18 million net increase.

I've raised the issue of Maters Mortgages in this House with the Attorney General. Those individuals are simply asking that there be a meeting of the legal counsel for both sides. They can get together and they can discuss the possibility of an out-of-court settlement in their circumstances. They feel frustrated that that's not happening. The Attorney General did open the door and has answered to me, I must say, which I found to be positive. I have directed a letter to him now, asking that he act upon the commitment that he made on that occasion to explore that possibility, to enter into discussions about the possibility of an out-of-court settlement, or at the very least allow the court case to proceed rapidly as opposed to being dragged out. A lot of the people involved are elderly people or people who are adversely impacted financially as a result of the situation they're facing.

I want to say as well that Brock University and Niagara College are now a bit apprehensive when they hear that the government is going to start pulling back money. Brock University has some excellent applications for provincial funding that I hope the Minister of Colleges and Universities will give serious consideration to, because they are very useful. Niagara College has to watch out, with all this amalgamation taking place, with the one big everything that this government wants, that we're going to see community colleges lost, forced to amalgamate, forced to come together.

If you notice, General Motors doesn't have one plant in Ontario; General Motors has a number of plants. They don't need just one big, massive plant in one place. The same with the other companies that you see around the province.

The last thing I want to mention is a very concerning comment I heard from the Premier. That comment was during his speech to the Fraser Forum out in BC. The Fraser Forum, for those perhaps watching this program who don't know, is a very right-wing, ultra-conservative organization which looks after the richest people and the most powerful people in our society very well. Their policies are geared to that.

The member for Oshawa who—I at least appreciate the fact that he listens in this House; I think he does anyway. I should tell him what the Premier said. He was panning the low dollar. For those in the auto industry, for those in the pulp and paper industry, for those in the resource extraction industry, that is a tremendous asset. I won't get into the quarrel tonight, the discussion over whether it's tax cuts or not. You people believe it is. I believe it's not. I think there are two or three other very compelling factors. One is the low Canadian dollar, which makes us very competitive; some would say arti-

ficially competitive, nevertheless it has produced thousands upon thousands of jobs for Ontario.

The second thing is the low interest rates. Low interest rates are extremely important to business so that they are able to obtain funding at a certain rate.

When I hear the Premier say to the Fraser Forum—I know it's popular with them and I know the right-wingers are now talking about, "Let's get that dollar way up." I don't know whether it's because the foreign holidays are popular with them or not, but for those of us in Ontario and for those of us who represent manufacturing centres, I can assure you that this dollar has made us extremely competitive. Without the dollar at its present rate, we wouldn't have nearly the sales nor nearly the investment that we have in this province. I think each one of us, if we looked in our ridings, would see that to be the case.

I know the Premier got away with saying that out west when he was with the Fraser Forum, and he probably got a nice round of applause. But whether you're in Pembroke, St Catharines, Scarborough, Oshawa, Windsor, Timmins, Sault Ste Marie or any number of places—I've asked them. When I was in cabinet, I met with people who were heads of businesses, as cabinet people do. I said, "What is the difference, for instance, for the pulp and paper industry of one cent on the dollar?" I was told in Thunder Bay that when the dollar shifted one cent one way or the other, it was \$17 million. That was one operation.

If the Premier is advocating a higher dollar, if the Premier is advocating that the Canadian dollar be allowed and encouraged to rise, I hope he recognizes the consequences for communities such as St Catharines, Oshawa, Oakville, Sault Ste Marie, Hamilton and other places, because that is a genuine competitive advantage. It would be like saying you want the interest rates to rise. I don't think anybody in this House would want the Premier to say that interest rates should rise. They have helped out an awful lot. When the province is trying to pay back the debt, it pays at an entirely different rate. When the province wants to borrow money, it can borrow it at a more favourable rate, and it's had to borrow an awful lot of it.

The last thing I would mention is abandonment of the debt. I read an article today about abandonment of the debt. Now it's a problem. Somebody is saying, "No, forget about the debt, it's all tax cuts." I heard for years that it was the debt. I believed my friends in the Chamber of Commerce. I believed my friends in the Taxpayers Coalition and the National Citizens' Coalition that the debt was a problem. I know that the debt will not be eliminated as quickly—it's a big job, a mammoth job—if we implement yet another round of tax cuts which will deprive the government of the funding it needs to carry out its programs.

Some members keep advocating: Why don't we get more money from the federal government? I would say: Why would they give you more money when they know you're simply going to give it away in a tax cut and take

all the credit? It's like Mel Lastman said: "There's Mike Harris out there saying 'Hurrah for the tax cut.' Meanwhile, the people of Metropolitan Toronto, through their local tax base, have to pay for that increase." That's what he is saying.

If all the money were going to be devoted to health care, if they could spend it directly on health care, for that matter, which is very difficult to do constitutionally, then that would be very good. I am for that. But I want to see that all that money is going to health care or education or another transfer area and not simply being used to implement a tax cut. That's exactly what would happen. It just goes to being given away in a tax cut. If you had cancelled the tax cut and said, "Yes, we want all that money devoted to those services," then you'd be on very solid ground.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of

Education and Training; concurrence in supply for the Office of the Premier; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Attorney General; concurrence in supply for the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat; concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Pursuant to the agreement of the House of earlier today, there shall be recorded divisions on these motions and the vote shall be deferred until tomorrow.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2321.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguee aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wetlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Clearly, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Armott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Rèlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

CONTENTS

Monday 6 December 1999

SECOND READINGS

Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act (Suspect Apprehension Pursuits), 1999, Bill 22,

Mr Tsubouchi

Mr Mazzilli..	1121, 1123, 1127, 1135
Mr Levac	1122, 1123, 1127
Mr Kormos	1122, 1128, 1136
Mr Agostino.....	1123
Mr Bartolucci.....	1124
Mr Bradley.....	1125, 1136
Ms Martel	1127, 1135
Ms Di Cocco.....	1127
Mr Parsons.....	1135
Agreed to	1136

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Mr Klees	1136
Mr Wettlaufer	1137
Mr Parsons.....	1138
Mr Bisson	1140
Mr Stewart	1149
Mr Conway	1150
Mr O'Toole.....	1154
Mr Bradley.....	1154
Votes deferred	1158

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Lundi 6 décembre 1999

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 commémorant le sergent Rick McDonald (poursuites en vue d'appréhender des suspects),

projet de loi 22, *M. Tsubouchi*

M. Lalonde	1126
------------------	------



No. 24A

N° 24A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 7 December 1999

Mardi 7 décembre 1999

**Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr**

**Président
L'honorable Gary Carr**

**Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers**

**Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers**

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
3330 Whitney Block, 99 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
3330 Édifice Whitney ; 99, rue Wellesley ouest
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400 ; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 décembre 1999

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): A funny thing happened on the way to the world trade forum in Seattle. The WTO agenda was sufficiently modest and vague that few felt it could fail. But fail it did, not only because of the riots, tear gas and rubber bullets but because of the differences between the have nations and the have-nots that are so irreconcilable that the negotiations broke down before they even got started.

The WTO talks also failed because the wealthy nations refused to retreat from entrenched positions. The European Union insisted on talks on new global rules on investment. Japan wanted the US to negotiate on weakening its rules that block imports. The US made the most demands and refused to back down on issues essential to its labour allies.

Services were on the table, casting doubt on Canada's ability to maintain its public health care and education system. A series of decisions at the organization's appeals tribunal had interfered with policies designed to protect the environment and social and cultural policy.

As a result, the WTO, which ought to symbolize the widespread benefits of global trade, is perceived as the hostage of protectionist instincts. The WTO is a negotiating forum but it lacks credibility as an agent of change promoting broad global prosperity. Its unwillingness to take up issues that would benefit developing countries at the expense of rich ones puts the WTO under a cloud of suspicion in the developing world.

Ontario's economy is heavily dependent on international trade. There are undeniable benefits to be derived from fair global trade. That message shouldn't be drowned out by the riots and the inability of the WTO to come to grips with the challenges of getting a global consensus.

MUNICIPAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise in the House today to congratulate the winners of the 1999 Town of Georgina Municipal Recognition Awards.

The Municipal Recognition Awards are set up to honour those who have made outstanding contributions to their communities. This year the town of Georgina has honoured 12 individuals from a variety of backgrounds who have dedicated their time and energy to a host of worthwhile causes.

Individuals were honoured for their contribution to causes such as preservation of our local heritages sites, celebrating and promoting sports and culture and helping our youth, seniors and others in need. These people have recognized that there is more to being part of a community than just living or working in it. Throughout our history, it has been the actions of concerned citizens who have made a positive difference and improved the development and progress of our province.

As a long-time resident of Georgina, I want to personally thank Gavin Morton, Crystal Monks, Crystal Moore, Gerry and Shirley Verdoold, Sharon and Murray Bowers, Ivan Day, Patti Preston, Joan and the late Ken Davenport and the late Larry Grasby for their efforts.

Through your generosity, caring and hard work, you have made our community a better place to live, prosper and enjoy life.

1340

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): It is with great concern and disappointment that I rise today to talk about the Fewer Municipal Politicians Act on local government reform. This omnibus bill does not favour the residents of the proposed amalgamated municipalities. It is corrupt. It permits the two cabinet ministers to have special consideration for the people of their ridings.

When I looked at this report, the Shortliffe report, and the omnibus bill, they contradict each other. Why is it that two cabinet ministers are getting special consideration? Why is that it in the report we don't recognize bilingual services in Ottawa-Carleton? Ottawa is the capital city of Canada. We are to give services in both languages, and it is clearly in there on page 8 of the Shortliffe report that the municipality should be recognized as a bilingual city.

Why is it that west Carleton, Cabinet Minister Norm Sterling's riding, could opt out of this agreement any time they want? Does it not apply to other regions within the new megacity? Why is it that Nepean will have

special consideration and Cumberland won't? They also have a surplus in the bank, but it is not considered.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The tremendous growth we are witnessing in the Ontario economy is the direct result of the economic and financial direction established by this government since 1995.

Today, Ontario leads not only the nation but every jurisdiction in the G8 in economic growth and job creation.

The bottom line is that tax cuts work to stimulate the economy. As a direct result of this government removing a sizeable portion of the tax burden from the backs of taxpayers, there is an optimism for the future of the province which has not been visible for many years.

Business leaders, the true economic leaders of the province through their organizations such as the chambers of commerce, the Ontario manufacturing association and the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which represent tens of thousands of employers in the province, agree with the economic policies of this government.

To date this government has reduced taxes 69 times, including reducing provincial personal income taxes by 30%, with a further 20% to come. Compare this to the 65 tax increases imposed by the former Liberal and NDP governments.

This year the deficit is down by more than 50%, from the projected \$2.08 billion to \$1.03 billion. As promised to the taxpayers in 1995, this government will balance the budget in 2000-01.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget Act will ensure that deficits will soon be a thing of the past.

Revenues are up, jobs are up. Ontario's future truly looks prosperous, and I am proud to be a member of the government which is leading the way to prosperity.

LITERACY

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Recently I had the opportunity to meet with the Ontario Literacy Coalition, which informed me that literacy is a significant issue for Ontario's seniors.

This organization would tell me that of the 1.7 million Ontarians at the lowest literacy level, 900,000, more than half of the total number, are over the age of 55. Yet there appears to be no government support for literacy programs directed at seniors.

Government allocations for literacy programming are directed towards employment readiness skills and training. It is obvious that the government must also focus literacy resources to include seniors.

One of the leading causes of hospitalization for seniors is the use of contraindicated medication. Literacy statistics would indicate that this is attributable to the inability of many seniors to translate or understand directions.

Also, as individuals age, their support systems, friends and family, change and disappear, making it difficult for many seniors with lower literacy levels to manage.

Improved literacy will help seniors to remain strong, healthy and independent so that they can age in place.

As their critic and advocate, I am not prepared to accept these literacy statistics and, as such, I am asking the minister responsible for seniors to act on this most serious issue.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today to share a well-kept secret with all members of this House.

We all know the importance of always being up to date on the issues of the day and to have a talented researcher supporting us. Would you like to know where you can get great research in a way that would truly benefit all involved? An ideal place is from the people who are doing it all the time: our university and college students.

Dr Magda Havas, a professor of environmental and resource studies at Trent University, approached me earlier this fall to propose a very creative initiative whose purpose would be twofold. Dr Havas proposed that her students would be given environmental issues that I, as the MPP, wanted researched. In her proposal, students would benefit by getting a chance to supply the theoretical knowledge they learn in their course, to sharpen their research skills and to see how their work can affect government policy.

In this partnership, I as the MPP stand to benefit from their top-quality research, giving me a better understanding of the environmental issues that affect my constituents in Peterborough.

Students at Trent are constantly displaying their high level of excellence in this and other fields. I understand that congratulations are in order to Matthew MacLeod, a Trent graduate student who received the 1999 Ministry of the Environment Award of Excellence. This is an example of the research being done by young people that we can tap into.

My congratulations to all members who will contact—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

RESTRUCTURATION DES MUNICIPALITÉS

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Aujourd'hui encore, je soulève la question des droits constitutionnels de la communauté francophone.

Cette fois-ci je ferai ma déclaration en anglais, afin de m'assurer que le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones me comprenne.

I am making this statement in English so that the minister will understand.

The minister responsible for francophone affairs is, and I quote from his own literature on the subject, "responsible for fostering the francophone community's participation in the government's agenda for renewal."

If the government's proposed municipal restructuring of Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury is not part of that agenda for renewal, then I don't know what is.

Yes, just as the minister has refused to comment on the Montfort decision and its importance to the francophone community, so has he refused to have a stand for declaring bilingual the restructured city of Ottawa, the national capital, as well as the new city of Sudbury.

Members of the francophone community are calling for the resignation of the minister. They feel that the minister has not fulfilled his responsibilities. He has been silent and invisible. He has not defended the constitutional rights of francophones within his very caucus.

The message from the francophone community is clear. It demands that the minister responsible for francophone Affairs take a stand, that he defend the constitutional rights of Franco-Ontarians and that he show some backbone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): I rise today to tell the House about the outrage people in the city of Toronto are feeling about the latest attack on democracy here in the city of Toronto since Bill 103.

People in Toronto held their own referendum and voted against amalgamation, and the government went ahead and did it anyway. Then the minister of the day and the minister after him, who is sitting in the House today, said, "OK, we've done it and now it's up to you, the city council, to work out the process from here: number of councillors, wards etc." The city of Toronto took that in good faith and spent a year and a half going through a process, including a process before the OMB.

I want you to know that residents from my community, from the East York section, went to those OMB hearings and spent countless hours trying to present their case. There were some winners and there were some losers in that case, but at the end of the day there was a process.

After all that money being spent, what does the government do? They download even more millions of dollars to the city of Toronto and at the same time bring in this bill saying that the city councillors are going to be reduced yet again. The city of Toronto has had it up to here with this government. When are they going to do something in the 90s? We wonder why they're not touching that area.

1350

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Because of the strong leadership of the Mike Harris government and the hard work of the people of Ontario—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. If I'm standing and somebody else is talking, that person is out of order.

I ask the member for Willowdale to start over again for me, please.

Mr Young: Because of the strong leadership of the Mike Harris government and the hard work of the people of Ontario, our province is once again the economic engine of this country.

I recently had the opportunity of meeting with small business leaders from the North York Chamber of Commerce. Small businesses are in fact responsible for 80% of jobs in this province. They are the driving force behind this province's economic success.

The business people I met with told me very clearly that our tax cuts, especially the payroll taxes, and our fight to reduce red tape has enabled them to do what they do best, and that is to create jobs. However, small businesses in my community continue to worry about the excessive tax burdens placed upon them by the federal government. Of particular concern is the employment insurance scheme that continues to be a tax on job creation.

Perhaps this holiday season the Scrooges in Ottawa can find it in their hearts to cut and return the projected \$147-billion surplus to taxpayers. As well as Ontario is doing, and we are doing well, we must never become complacent. Bringing hope, growth and opportunity to Ontario is dependent upon our keeping our Blueprint commitment to further cut red tape, to cut taxes and to reduce the size of government. Families and small businesses in Willowdale and across this province expect and deserve nothing less.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 11, An Act to reduce red tape, to promote good government through better management of Ministries and agencies and to improve customer service by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting four new Acts / *Projet de loi 11, Loi visant à réduire les formalités administratives, à promouvoir un bon gouvernement par une meilleure gestion des ministères et organismes et à améliorer le service à la clientèle en modifiant ou abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant quatre nouvelles lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Wednesday, December 1, 1999, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PENSION BENEFITS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the MPPs Pension Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 1996 sur le régime de retraite des députés.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. Would the member for Bruce-Grey please take his seat.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): After some months of consultation with respect to many different people in the pension area and pension plan participants themselves, the government is proceeding with some reforms to the Pension Benefits Act of Ontario.

Among the things included: It will allow Ontarians easier access to their own retirement accounts; it will provide access to the entire amount for individuals faced with hardship or difficult circumstances; it also proposes to do away with the necessity of buying an annuity so that at the end of an individual's time, with respect to their retirement and pension account, the amount remaining in their pension plan will be able to go to their beneficiaries as opposed to going to the insurance company from whom you purchased an annuity.

No doubt there are many more changes that could and should be made to the Pension Benefits Act of Ontario, but we regard this as the first step, and a necessary first step, towards reforming the act.

GERMAN PIONEERS DAY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LE JOUR DES PIONNIERS ALLEMANDS

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to proclaim German Pioneers Day / Projet de loi 28, Loi proclamant le Jour des pionniers allemands.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. I declare the motion carried.

Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): During and immediately after the American Revolution, there were thousands of United Empire—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I ask the member for Kingston and the Islands to withdraw that remark, please.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I withdraw.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: During and after the American Revolution 200 years ago, there were thousands of United Empire Loyalists who came to Canada—British North America, as it was then known—from the United States. Many of these were of German origin who had earlier settled in Pennsylvania and New York and even as far south as Georgia.

These settlers came to Ontario looking for religious freedom, and they came to Upper and Lower Canada. They came in search of land and they were given free land by the then Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, John Graves Simcoe.

That was the first wave of German settlers who—

The Deputy Speaker: I didn't want to get into the debate of it. I just wanted a brief statement, so I appreciate that very much.

Mr Wettlaufer: It is to pay tribute to those pioneers who came to this part of the country.

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (MINIMUM READINESS), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (DISPONIBILITÉ MINIMALE)

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

An Act to amend the Ambulance Act to provide for the minimum staffing and equipping of ambulance stations / Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances pour assurer la dotation minimale en personnel et en équipement des postes d'ambulances.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Lalonde has introduced a bill to amend the Ambulance Act. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? It is carried.

Does the member have a brief statement?

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): The bill amends the Ambulance Act by adding a new section 19(1). The new section requires the operator of a land ambulance service to ensure that for at least 12 hours each day, at least one ambulance and at least two people qualified to staff the ambulance are either located in the ambulance station or are providing ambulance services outside of the station. The 12 hours need not be consecutive.

1400

VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I'd like to bring to the members' attention Bruce Smith in the members' east gallery, the former member for Middlesex.

Whether you're interested or not, I was going to bring you up to date, member from Sudbury, on the health of our Deputy Speaker. I was down to see Colleen in the nurses' thing today, and our congratulations to the efficient staff here: Temperature is down, temperament is not.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is there consent? It is agreed.

Hon Mr Sterling: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 11.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I'm going to hold that vote, and I recognize the member for Hamilton West on a point of order.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I just wanted a brief explanation. I haven't been advised of the request here, so if I could ask the government leader's indulgence for a quick explanation, perhaps we can still accommodate him.

Hon Mr Sterling: On a point of order as well, Mr Speaker: Mr Lalonde has introduced his bill late for private members' hour, and it's waiving notice with regard to the requirement that it be two weeks in advance of the time it's debated.

Mr Christopherson: That wouldn't be a problem, Mr Speaker. We would provide unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Sterling has moved that, notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot item 11.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? It is carried.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to ask the Minister of Finance to do a statement about the changes to the MPPs' pension plan that they've announced in the House today.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I rise today to talk about the Mike Harris government's strong commitment to Ontario's farmers.

Agriculture is the second-largest industry in the province, contributing \$25 billion annually to the economy. Earlier today, the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Mike Harris, reiterated this government's commitment to providing a strong safety net for Ontario's farmers.

As we all know, farmers across Canada have been under tremendous pressure. That is why it is essential for Ontario's farmers and for the economy they support and depend on that we have an effective safety net system.

Today I want to inform my colleagues that Ontario is determined to take a leadership role to win for our farmers a fair share of the dollars earmarked for farm income safety net programs.

The federal and provincial ministers of agriculture will be meeting in Toronto over the next two days. The goal of this meeting is to reach an agreement on the national safety net framework. My goal is to ensure that such an agreement recognizes that the size of each province's agriculture industry is the only equitable basis for the allocation of federal dollars.

This government understands the tremendously valuable contribution that farmers make to the social and economic well-being of every person in Ontario. That is why, time and time again, we have committed ourselves to supporting our agriculture industry.

We acted on that promise last December, when we were the first province to announce an income disaster assistance program for our farmers in recognition of the fact that, through no fault of their own, producers of hogs, cattle, grain and oilseeds, as well as some horticultural crops, were facing drastic reductions in their income.

We are ready to act on that promise again. We will do our part and provide our full share of what Ontario's farmers need and deserve.

I'm pleased to inform the House that Ontario remains committed to the agricultural income disaster assistance program and we will spend up to an additional \$30 million to assist farmers in need.

We want to ensure that these additional funds are used in a way that best meets the needs of Ontario's farmers. We're calling on the federal Liberals to sit down and negotiate with us to find ways to deliver this support without undermining other safety net programs that are so important to Ontario's farmers. We will do our part. We fully expect the federal Liberals to do theirs.

At the first ministers meeting this summer, Premier Mike Harris told the federal Liberals that Ontario's farmers are entitled to a fair share, an equitable share, of

federal safety net funding. I took that same message to the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of agriculture meeting in July.

At the International Plowing Match this past September, we reiterated our position to Ontario's farm leaders.

This government has made a promise to Ontario's hardworking farmers, and that promise includes winning national recognition of the fact that agriculture, whether in Ontario or the Prairies, is a risky business. It includes ensuring that our farmers are not penalized for their diversity and it includes providing our farmers with the best possible combination of risk management tools.

So tomorrow, when I take my place at the table along with the ministers of agriculture from Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia, from Alberta and Quebec, I will be insisting that Ontario farmers receive their fair share. I will ask the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to recognize that individual farmers in Ontario are facing hardships as severe, and in some cases more so, as their counterparts elsewhere in Canada.

I will emphasize that Ontario is committed to enhancing safety net programming for Ontario's farmers. The Mike Harris government is fully prepared to put up our share of the funding and fully expects the federal government to come through. I will remind the federal minister that a national agreement is a partnership, and in a true partnership action is not taken unilaterally. When that becomes the norm, when some partners are more—or less—equal, then perhaps it is time to question that partnership.

If the federal Liberals do not give Ontario farmers their fair share of the national safety net dollars, our province may have no choice but to leave the national system and negotiate a made-in-Ontario safety net program.

That is what I will be doing, questioning a partnership that does not treat its partners equally, seeking some stability, some predictability for our agriculture industry, fighting to secure Ontario's farmers their fair share of federal funding.

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): The minister today has announced that he thinks farmers should get their fair share. It should come as no surprise that our caucus also believes farmers should get their fair share.

The Ontario corn producers and other commodity groups have raised this issue for some time. They've raised this issue for months, all through the negotiations on the AIDA program, and now months later the minister is agreeing with Ontario farmers. It's better late than never.

But what the minister doesn't say is that the federal government pays more in Ontario than the province does. So if you really want to help farmers, I say increase your provincial share to match more closely the federal contribution, and lower premiums for farmers.

The principle of fair share should start at home. In the last four years Ontario farmers have not received their promised fair share from this government. The minister's statement ignores the fact that his government does not

practise what it preaches when it comes to the concept of a fair share for Ontario agriculture.

Let's talk more about the concept of fair share for farmers the minister announced today. The minister said today that agriculture is the second-largest industry and contributes \$25 billion to the provincial economy. Other studies have shown that every \$1 million created by agriculture creates 31 new jobs. Clearly this is an industry that deserves support.

In 1995 the Tories promised to support agriculture. They said in their rural document, "Under a Mike Harris government agriculture will regain its fair share of government support." But since 1995 the government has instead cut agriculture. In the first three years, the Mike Harris government cut \$18 million from research, lab and field services; cut \$44 million from its own contribution to safety net programs like crop insurance and market revenue, and cut \$10 million from marketing and food processing programs.

1410

The Farmers of Ontario calculated that the ministry budget would have to increase by 54% to reach the level it was in 1990 and called on the government to take action, but Mike Harris continued his cuts. How can the Mike Harris government and his party now point to the federal government and preach sanctimoniously about demanding their fair share? Again, how can Mike Harris and the Tory government preach about a federal government and ask for these types of demands?

Farmers across the province were waiting to hear that the government would make a commitment to sending out assistance on the new federal disaster program. We asked questions here in the Legislature about when the government was going to take action and start moving this disaster money to farmers. But instead we got an announcement that sadly adds to the government's sense of a twisted fair share for Ontario farmers.

They announced that all remaining 33 field offices in southern Ontario would be closed and replaced with 13 information offices, 1-800 numbers and Internet access. They announced that government-by-telephone was coming to the farmers. I hope it doesn't operate like the Family Responsibility Office.

We are now six months into a program that was announced by your government, the Healthy Futures program. We have seen nothing about it and there are no details to it.

I don't support this smokescreen by this minister. I do support and demand a fair share by the Ontario government for our farmers in Ontario. I'm afraid today is just another rant and a smokescreen by this Minister of Agriculture.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I'll tell the minister what we feel in our part of Ontario about the closing of the ag offices: very serious; part of the community.

Also, another very serious problem we have in eastern Ontario—and the minister talks all the time about how he cares about agriculture—is dead livestock removal,

which will cause lots of problems with the environment and health care. Some of the people who contract in eastern Ontario tell us that there will be hundreds of dead livestock left in the farms and the fields if the minister doesn't step in and do something about it. One of the local contractors has said that his volume of dead animals has dropped by 70%. He's reduced his staff by 65% and his truck fleet by 65%, and estimates that 15,000 dead animals will be left in eastern Ontario in the next year.

If the minister really cares about agriculture, he should look at that situation, because that's a complaint from all sides of the House.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to express some sympathy for the poor Minister of Agriculture and Food. I want to say to him that I agree with him in part. I think it is atrocious that the federal Liberal government in Ottawa regularly boasts about their surplus but, when it comes to helping farmers in a time of need, they only give the back of the hand. That is truly the tragedy here.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Some of the Liberals don't want to hear this, but they need to acknowledge that this is really what is happening.

The reality is that agriculture in Ontario and agriculture across the country faces an international challenge. The United States is subsidizing their farm economy to the tune of \$30 billion a year. The European nations are subsidizing their farm economies even more. Yet there is a failure in Canada, on the part of the federal government, to acknowledge that they have any responsibility to respond and to help Canadian farmers.

After having expressed my sympathy to the poor Minister of Agriculture and Food, I want to say to the Minister of Agriculture and Food: You need to clean up your own house first.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: Now the Conservatives don't want to hear it. Would you guys get together?

Minister, it is your government that has in effect cut the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in this province by almost \$200 million. You have cut the ministry's budget almost in half. When you take into account the rising cost, when you take into account the changes in agriculture, in fact the budget cut is even more than that.

Minister, you cannot, with any credibility, after having cut so much from the agricultural budget in this province, having taken so much from farm communities and rural communities in this province, go and talk to the federal government with any credibility whatsoever. None.

I want to say to you, Minister, it is worse than that. Your record out there in rural Ontario is a record of cutting the basic infrastructure that allows rural communities to thrive and to prosper. When you start cutting the health care facilities, when you come into a community and you threaten to close the community school, when you start cutting the budgets for bridges and roads and the rural infrastructure that allows farmers to get their product to market, you are doing even more damage. Then when

you go out there and close the very agricultural offices that are supposed to be there to provide farmers with information, support and advice, you are sending them a message that, frankly, at the end of the day, you don't care about them.

Minister, by closing the agricultural offices in communities like Dryden and in other more remote parts of the province, you really are saying to those farmers that they don't matter. Telling them that they can have a 1-800 call—let's face the facts of what that means for your government. First, it means 1-800 no answer; then it means 1-800 line busy; then it means 1-800 voice mail; then, at the end, it means 1-800 voice mail, message not returned. That is the reality of your government.

So I say to you, you come forward with a plan to restore the rural infrastructure in this province; you come forward with a plan to restore the funding of the Ministry of Agriculture; you come forward with a plan to provide farmers with the information, advice, science and knowledge they need in an ever more complex agricultural environment, and then you can go to the federal government with some credibility, and I would say the federal government will then have to listen to you.

DEFERRED VOTES

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): It is now time for the deferred votes on the motions by Mr Klees for concurrence in supply. There are 10 of them. There will be one bell.

The division bells rang from 1419 to 1424.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. All those in favour will please rise one at a time to be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Palladini, Al
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Skanca, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time to be recognized.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurred in supply for the Ministry of Education and Training. Same vote? Agreed? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

In concurrence for supply for the Office of the Premier. Agreed? I heard a no.

The members will please rise one at a time and be recognized.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Palladini, Al
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Eves, Ernie L.	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Murdoch, Bill	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed will please rise and be recognized.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley
Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bisson, Gilles	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

On Mr Klees's motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services, same vote? It is agreed.

1430

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

On Mr Klees's motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services, is it agreed? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

On Mr Klees's motion for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment, is it agreed? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health. Same vote? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Attorney General. Same vote? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat. Same vote? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Klees has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Same vote? It is agreed.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ORAL QUESTIONS**MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING**

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Yesterday you introduced your 175-page sledgehammer bill into this Legislature. When we finally got an opportunity to read the bill, we realized just how big a sledgehammer it really is.

Hidden within your mega-bill are sweeping new powers for the Mike Harris cabinet. In particular, in section 37(1)(b) you actually give the cabinet the ability to change any law that has been passed by this Parliament. You are reserving unto the cabinet full, complete and absolute authority to change any law behind closed doors, without debate and without this Legislature even having to sit.

Minister, are you so arrogant that you've forgotten it is the people who are in charge and that this Legislature is where the people of this province have their say?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): No, I have not forgotten that at all. Indeed what we are trying to do is initiate a process that will allow for this bill, if passed by this Legislature, to have consequential amendments that affect other pieces of legislation. This is a common problem, particularly because, for instance, if the city of Sudbury is changed to the city of Greater Sudbury, perhaps Sudbury would not be able to have grants under a particular act or law because the name of the city has been changed. We wouldn't want that to happen, so we are trying to allow for Sudbury, Ottawa, Hamilton and Haldimand-Norfolk to have the same rights under the new legislation as they have under the present legislation. That is the intent of the bill rather than the accusations the honourable member raises.

Mr McGuinty: This provision is, to our knowledge, without precedent in the history of Ontario legislation. It gives full, complete—and I will repeat, full, complete—and absolute authority to the cabinet to make any changes to any laws that the cabinet, in its full and absolute and sole discretion, deems to be worthwhile. That's what this provision says.

This minister has a lot of nerve to stand up and talk about the rights of people. What he's doing, by means of this provision, is robbing them of their rights. You are depriving them of their rights. You are depriving us on this side of the Speaker to debate legislation in this Legislature. What you want to do is preserve for yourself the right to pass laws behind closed doors. There is one word for that; it's called dictatorship.

You were supposed to be the people who were going to stand up for people. Why, Minister, are you appropriating unto yourself the right to pass laws to amend any laws of any kind at any time behind closed doors?

Hon Mr Clement: The short answer to the question is: I'm not. I will read the particular provision for the benefit of the House. It says that we can make regulations providing for "consequential" amendments to any act that, in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, are necessary to the effective implementation of this act. If that isn't good enough for the honourable member—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: I am prepared to give a further undertaking to this House, in addition to the wording in that particular piece of legislation, that this government will introduce legislation in the following session to repeal this clause and to confirm all the uses of this clause by legislation so that it is all done according to the wishes of this House.

Mr McGuinty: You have got to ask yourself what is going on over there on that side of the House. They put together apparently a finely crafted piece of legislation, they put a great deal of forethought into it, and now they decide, upon reflection, that they will first pass this law and then later on, in January, February, March, April,

they will pass a second law which will retract this provision.

What we are asking from you, Minister, recognizing now that this is an anti-democratic provision, is that you agree that you will remove this provision today from this bill.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member clearly is enjoying listening to the sound of his own voice rather than the answers that are provided to him. This particular piece of statute is necessary so that the bill can save the municipalities grant monies, save them other rights under legislation—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, Minister. There is nothing in the rules of this House—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, I'd appreciate your order. Minister.

1440

Hon Mr Clement: This is designed to protect the municipalities, protect their grant structure, protect their rights under current legislation. We make no apologies for that. But we have given you an undertaking, which is duly considered by this government, a legitimate undertaking to ensure that any regulations that are passed under this particular power are sanctioned by the Legislature. They will be sanctioned by the Legislature. You'll have your opportunity to debate it, you'll have your opportunity to discuss it at that time, and that is a good-faith undertaking by this government.

The Deputy Speaker: Question? Who is the question to?

Mr McGuinty: To the same minister, Speaker.

There is another antidemocratic provision found within your bill. There is a provision that allows 75 people in any city or region to thwart the democratic will of the majority. If communities happen to work out a local restructuring solution, a solution which they determine works, that solution can be dismantled by just 75 names on a petition. Seventy-five names on a petition, and apparently you're going to send in a commissioner with a sledgehammer. That commissioner can wipe out a city or a town without even seeking permission from this Legislature.

We've already talked about the other antidemocratic provisions. Here's a second one. You've already cast out on the first. Will you now cast out on the second and will you agree as well to remove this provision from your bill?

Hon Mr Clement: I know the honourable member is trying to distract attention from the fact that he flip-flopped yesterday on his intentions on this bill. I know that's a tough pill for him to swallow, but I would encourage him or his researchers to actually read the legislation. It makes it absolutely clear that that particular provision is designed to ensure that you can have a public debate, you can have a process and that the council that is resisting restructuring, for their own personal interests perhaps, there is a way for the citizenry to get that on the

agenda. We make no apologies for that because that is a democratic aspect of this bill of which we are particularly proud.

Mr McGuinty: Let me explain the minister's bill to the minister. You have in your bill a provision which allows any 75 people resident in a community to sign a petition asking that you send in an unelected, unaccountable commissioner to impose a restructuring solution on that community, notwithstanding that that may be against the wishes of the duly elected representatives of the people living in that community. That's what your provision is all about. That is antidemocratic, Minister.

I'm asking you to stand up and yank this provision from your bill, fully recognizing that this is an antidemocratic provision.

Hon Mr Clement: Three points. First, there is nothing in the bill that compels the appointment of a commissioner, so he's wrong. There is nothing in the bill that is antidemocratic, because this is designed to protect and enhance democracy so that the citizenry can have the type of lower taxes and more efficient government they deserve. The third point is, clearly on that side of the House they are not in favour of lower taxes and a more efficient level of government. We on this side of the House are protecting the taxpayer. Who are you trying to protect over on that side of the House? That's what we want to know.

Mr McGuinty: I defy this minister to stand up and tell us how it is in keeping with democratic principles that 75 people can be allowed to sign a petition and compel a commissioner or this minister to impose a restructuring solution on a community. I defy this minister to tell us how that is in keeping with traditional democratic principles that have been articulated and developed century after century after century right across the free world. You tell me, Minister, why giving authority to 75 people resident in a community to invoke a commissioner who will come and step into that community and impose a restructuring solution on the overwhelming majority and against the express wishes of the elected representatives is in keeping with democracy.

Hon Mr Clement: I'd like the honourable member to tell me something. Show me in the legislation where it is compelling the minister or anyone else to appoint a commissioner. There is no compelling whatsoever and I challenge him to show where in the legislation it does that.

He talks about the rights of the councillors, the rights of the local politicians. Who is protecting the rights of the taxpayers? Who is protecting the taxpayers when the city council or the town council of 10 elected representatives is closing off debate, is closing off the potential for lower taxes?

We are on the side of the people. What side are you on?

IMPERIAL LIFE ASSURANCE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Since July of this year, Imperial Life Assurance has stopped processing claims or paying any benefits, including medical and prescription drug claims, for over 23,000 Eaton's workers, most of whom live in Ontario. To this date, they refuse to provide official notification to those workers that they're not going to pay and why they're not going to pay.

Workers have died and their families are not receiving insurance benefits. People who rely on prescription medicine, including HIV-positive workers, cannot apply to the Trillium drug plan because they haven't received a formal notice of discontinuance of benefits. There's chaos here: 23,000 workers, most of whom live in Ontario, can't get medical benefits, aren't getting the life insurance they need, while members of their family die.

Can you tell us what you as Minister of Labour have done to help these 23,000 workers, most of whom live in Ontario?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): If you would send me over the documentation, I'll be happy to review the situation. Obviously, if that is the situation, it would seem reasonable to me that we would investigate and examine it. I'll be happy to do that.

Mr Hampton: I'm surprised the minister doesn't know about this, because workers have been evicted from their apartments, workers have been forced to go to food banks. The company has deliberately made it impossible for employees to convert from the group plan to individual coverage with another carrier and they did so in conscious disregard for the guidelines set down by the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association. In other words, they're saying: "We're going to take advantage of these workers while they're down. We don't care what the guidelines say; we don't care what fairness says." I'm surprised you're not aware of this.

Minister, the Trillium drug plan is under the sponsorship of your government. Would you just do this: Would you require Imperial Life Assurance to at least give those workers who need drug coverage notice so they can go to the Trillium plan and receive the drug coverage that any citizen of Ontario ought to receive? Would you do that?

Hon Mr Stockwell: As I said to the leader of the third party, I'll be happy to review the situation. I understand in certain circumstances there's an individual case. With respect to the 23,000, it is something I'd be happy to review and look into. Any assistance you could provide I would greatly appreciate.

Mr Hampton: I'm pleased to hear that you're willing to do something. Actually, if you really want to know how to help these workers, there was something called the employee wage protection plan. It was in place to help workers who were suddenly put out of work when a major corporate employer went down. Your government cut the employee wage protection plan. If you'd care to put that back in place, that would be a real help.

I'll tell you what more you can do. When these workers wanted to transfer to another insurance carrier for individual coverage so their benefits could be continued, the insurance company refused and your government did nothing. This has been very public. Your government did nothing. You could have brought pressure to bear on the company to at least comply with the Canadian insurance industry guidelines. Would you do that now, Minister?

Hon Mr Stockwell: As the Ministry of Labour, we are compelled to make people comply with the labour laws in this province. We are doing just that. If you have evidence to prove that in fact they're contravening the labour legislation within Ontario, I would be very happy to investigate the situation.

I understand the allegations you've made. They are very serious charges and serious allegations. If you have proof that any of these companies are contravening any labour legislation in Ontario, I give you my undertaking that I will vigorously investigate and vigorously challenge them to meet those guidelines and force them to in that case. But at this point I have not seen any evidence of that. If I can see evidence, or you have evidence, please supply it to me because I'll be happy to investigate it. But until that happens, there are laws of the land that they have to live under. If they are not living under them, and you have evidence they're not living under them, please give it to me. I will vigorously proceed under that particular act.

1450

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I have to say, I don't know where the Minister of Labour has been for the last four months.

Minister, I have before me a copy of section 36(b) of the act which is going to force amalgamation on Hamilton area municipalities. It says that you can pass regulations providing for consequential amendments to any act that in the opinion of the Lieutenant Governor in Council are necessary for effective implementation of the act. Any act, minister.

What this means is that this very public process of law-making, where laws are made in public by the people's representatives, where they are debated in the open, where there is a record kept, you are now as a government going to take behind closed doors where there is no accountability. We don't know who said what. We don't know why it was done. You're not forced to defend your record. This is unprecedented in the history of parliamentary democracy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Question.

Mr Hampton: How do you justify something which runs against all the rules of parliamentary democracy? Do you believe in the divine right of kings, too?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): No, I do not. In fact we have tried to put in a lot of safeguards

because I agree with the honourable member, and indeed the Leader of the Opposition, that this is a circumstance that should be used sparingly and very cautiously. That's why it says "consequential amendments" rather than any amendments.

I gave an undertaking on behalf of the government that we would supply a bill that would, in the future, sanctify any changes we do as a result of this particular section in the legislation. That is the undertaking of myself and of the government that we represent. We are concerned about it as well. It is necessary to protect the rights of citizens and the cities that are the subject of this bill. We make no apologies for trying to ensure the transition is a smooth one, but there should be protections in there and I agree with the honourable member.

Mr Hampton: The minister says this is unusual. This is unprecedented. My God, Third World dictators would be proud of you. Third World dictators would like to have this kind of power. You can go behind closed doors. With a stroke of a pen, you could wipe out legislation. With a stroke of a pen, you could wipe out needed community services. With a stroke of a pen, you can do all those things and you never have to answer to anybody.

Do you realize how far beyond the pale this goes? Do you realize that this is dictatorship? Saying that you're going to come along later, after the fact, and you're going to do away with it, doesn't do away with the fact that it's dictatorship. If you believe in this institution at all, take this clause out of the legislation now. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member bandies about the term "dictatorship" quite freely. Coming from a constituency, I'm sure he has constituents, as well, who have escaped dictatorships. My constituents know the difference between the duly elected government in Ontario and a dictatorship. I encourage him to use his words more sparingly because he cheapens the term "dictatorship" when he uses it in such a cavalier manner.

I know, and this government knows, how important it is to be accountable to the people. That is why we are trying to ensure that citizens are protected under this legislation, that cities' powers and rights and responsibilities are protected under this legislation. That's why we gave an undertaking right here, right now—perhaps he doesn't want yes for an answer, but we gave an undertaking—that we will bring back to this Legislature for debate, for discussion, for a final vote any consequential amendments that have to be made on behalf of the people of the Ontario, and that is our solemn undertaking.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE SERVICES

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the minister responsible for franco-phone affairs.

There was a story in today's paper with a headline that reads as follows: "Pourtant ministre des Affaires franco-phones John Baird se serait opposé au statut bilingue,"

which loosely translated means, "Even though Minister responsible for francophone affairs John Baird is opposed" to making this new city of Ottawa bilingual.

Francophones across the province of Ontario are today wondering whose side you're on. I'm going to give you the opportunity now to stand in your place and tell us what is the position that you have taken with respect to making the new city of Ottawa bilingual. Are you for that or are you against it? Francophones are exceedingly interested in what you have to say about this.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Those of us on this side of the House have no problem with the new city of Ottawa being bilingual.

Mr McGuinty: What they want to know is, are you working actively on their behalf, with all persons that you might come across, whether in your community, in your caucus or in your cabinet? Are you advocating on behalf of francophones and ensuring that you are doing whatever you possibly can in keeping with the recommendation of this third party, Glen Shortliffe, chosen by your government, who said it's important that we recognize the unique characteristics of the nation's capital and recommended that we have a bilingual city, bilingual where numbers warrant? Can you provide that assurance to francophones that you're working actively on their behalf and lobbying—and that it's your intention to put forward an amendment, by the way—to ensure that the new city of Ottawa is in fact bilingual where numbers warrant?

L'hon M. Baird : Notre gouvernement bien sûr appuie la Loi sur les services en français. Il y a quelques semaines on a célébré l'anniversaire de ce projet de loi.

La région d'Ottawa-Carleton est déjà bilingue dans les services qu'elle offre à la population de notre région. Je suis sûr que la ville d'Ottawa, la ville de Vanier, la ville de Gloucester et la ville de Cumberland aussi offrent les services en français pour les citoyens de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton. Le gouvernement de l'Ontario n'a jamais désigné aucune ville de l'Ontario officiellement bilingue. C'est la responsabilité de la ville d'Ottawa et la nouvelle ville d'Ottawa si le projet de loi est adopté. Bien sûr, on va regarder les pourparlers des nouveaux conseils, comme députés et comme ministère des Affaires francophones, pour être sûrs que les services en français seront offerts en français.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Modern developments in manufacturing, including just-in-time inventory, have re-emphasized the vital importance of fully adequate highways for jobs and investment in southwestern Ontario.

Will the minister tell the House what criteria the Minister of Transportation uses to determine whether the capacity of the 401 highway and other superhighways is

adequate, and how it prepares forecasts of the future demands on our highways?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): In order to determine the capacity of highways to make sure they are adequate, the MTO considers the numbers and types of vehicles as well as the configuration of the existing highways. Forecasts of future demands are based on historic traffic growth and projected changes in population and economic activity.

Currently we are completing a four-year, \$1-billion upgrade to 401, 402 and the QEW. Highway 401 is being widened east towards Port Hope and Highways 11 and 69 are being four-laned. We're keeping our campaign commitment to four-lane the 417 north to Amnrior. We've kept our promise to build 416, the Veterans Memorial Highway. We're spending this year the highest amount on capital spending in this province's history at close to \$700 million. We have proven our commitment to the highways and the infrastructure of this province.

1500

Mr Wood: The minister is also aware of the great public concern about safety on a stretch of Highway 401 west of London, where a number of fatalities occurred earlier this year. In September, the minister announced an action plan for safer roads in response to those fatalities. The plan was aimed at highway safety, infrastructure planning and immediate improvements to the 401. Will the minister tell the House what progress has been made on implementing this action plan?

Hon Mr Turnbull: As a result of the action plan for safer roads, I'm pleased to report that 57 kilometres of the total of 114 kilometres of the highway shoulders in southwestern Ontario have already been fully paved with rumble strips. Permanent roadway markers have been installed in 20 kilometres of highway so far. Speed signs have been installed on the 401 near Highgate Road. We will be installing additional signage which will warn people of speeding and also the failure to wear seatbelts.

The Ontario Advisory Group on Safe Driving met last week for the first time, and I'm confident that this broad-ranging group of road-user stakeholders will come forward with useful suggestions.

We're discussing with my counterparts from Michigan needs and alternatives in the Windsor area. We have demonstrated our commitment to highways and infrastructure.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Last June 22, the Minister of Health said that your government had dealt with the emergency room crisis once and for all. Yesterday, ambulances, even those with the most critically ill patients, were being turned away from 10 Toronto hospitals, 15 other hospitals in Toronto were taking only the most seriously ill cases, and ambulance drivers were forced to refuse to take their patients out of town because

it would put their patients at risk. Today 17 hospitals were still on emergency redirect as of noon.

Yet this morning the Premier said that this is not really a bad thing. He says he's not sure you could ever fix the problem of the emergency rooms. Minister, do you agree with your Premier that shutting down access to emergency care is just going to be reality in Mike Harris's Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Obviously, it isn't an optimum situation. Nobody ever wants to see redirect occur or critical care bypass occur. However, redirect is better than not having a system in place to cope with it at all. I do note that she acknowledges today that my figures are slightly different than hers. Mine say that nine out of 25 hospitals in the Toronto area are operating normally today, nine are on redirect and seven are on critical care bypass. So we differ by one hospital, I suppose, in that regard.

I would point out to her that we are taking steps to try to address the situation. This year alone, hospital funding for direct patient care is up by over \$400 million; \$75 million over two years to allow hospitals to increase beds and ER services. That \$75 million has been flowed already this year.

We are doing things to try to alleviate the situation. The ministry has issued guidelines with respect to emergency room facilities. They have an audit procedure to make sure that hospitals are dealing with those guidelines and implementing those guidelines if need be. So we are taking steps to try to improve the situation and, to answer your question, we will continue to take further steps to improve the situation.

Mrs McLeod: Saying that only 16 emergency rooms are on redirect today is like saying that we're making progress because 35% of cancer patients are being seen within an acceptable waiting time. This is what this government is prepared to accept as being inevitable. The fact is that your government has made it worse. That's what emergency room nurses are saying today. Hospital cuts and hospital restructuring have shut down too many beds, and patients are lying on stretchers in emergency rooms because there isn't a bed for them in the hospital.

The crisis is not happening because hospitals are choosing to do elective surgery or because, as the Premier suggested this morning, health workers are taking Christmas holidays. This is a crisis today. Minister, it is going to get worse. Patients are going to die unless your government takes action immediately to deal with this crisis.

Will you go to your cabinet meeting tomorrow and tell the Premier that refusing emergency care to critically ill patients is indeed a crisis, and will you demand that immediate action be taken to open more hospital beds now, as emergency workers are telling you you must?

Hon Mr Eves: We are not blaming other persons for the situation.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Eves: She intimated in her question that we were blaming other people and health care workers.

Indeed, we are not doing that. Ontario hospitals will be able to treat—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. Sometimes when you ask a question you want to hear the answer.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm going to hear it whether you want to or not. Deputy Premier.

Hon Mr Eves: Steps are being taken by the government to increase capacity in emergency rooms across the province—\$97 million to 50 hospital emergency rooms province-wide to fast-track capital expansions. Ontario hospitals will be able to treat 18% more emergency and ambulatory patients this year than they could in 1995-96, when we assumed office.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Members for Windsor West and Thunder Bay-Atikokan come to order.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Windsor West, I'll not warn you again. Deputy Premier.

Hon Mr Eves: We are taking steps to improve the situation. Indeed, the situation in this province has dramatically improved from when the following headlines were in place—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Eves: Excuse me, no. Elinor Caplan was health minister when these headlines were read: "Two Area Ambulance Drivers Criticize Rerouting Patients from Hospital"; "Elderly Woman Turned Away from Two Area Hospitals Last Week Died Christmas Day"; "It's not uncommon for Ottawa's five major hospitals to redirect ambulances to another hospital when they're busy on serious cases"—etc., all from Elinor Caplan's reign as Minister of Health. To the honourable member, yes, the situation has dramatically improved, no thanks to them or their party.

PROFESSIONAL BOXING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I read this morning the news of the unfortunate death of Stephan Johnson, an American boxer who died from a brain injury received in a fight in New Jersey last month. I understand that this boxer sustained a knockout during a fight in Toronto in April 1999 and as a result was placed on medical suspension from fighting.

Minister, what does the Ontario government do to ensure the safety of professional boxers in the province of Ontario?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I thank the member for the question. Mr Johnson's death was a real tragedy, compounded by the fact that it shouldn't have happened; it didn't have to happen. As the questioner pointed out, Mr Johnson was in a boxing match in Ontario in April this year when he was knocked out. A knockout in Ontario,

which is the strictest jurisdiction in terms of policing professional boxing, qualifies for an automatic suspension. Before that suspension can be lifted, the fighter has to successfully undergo three medical tests.

Mr Johnson had only undergone one test, a CAT scan, I believe, and the suspension hadn't been lifted at the time he was involved in a fight in New Jersey and suffered that fatal injury.

Mr Galt: Thank you for that answer about ensuring professional fighting is indeed well regulated in Ontario. Certainly safety in the ring was always of great concern to me. That was one of the many reasons why I never got into a boxing ring myself. It's also one of the reasons I didn't get into basketball as well.

Interjection: What are you in now?

Mr Galt: Trouble.

Minister, this boxer was suspended by the Ontario athletics commissioner. He should not have been permitted to fight until he was medically fit to do so. What can the government do to make sure that other jurisdictions make safety the number one priority in boxing and respect our suspensions?

Hon Mr Runciman: Suspension in Ontario is communicated to other boxing commissions throughout North America. All the medical suspensions are posted on what they call a fight facts registry. Regrettably, United States jurisdictions are not required to uphold suspensions imposed in other countries. In this instance, obviously, they ignored the Ontario suspension.

I am writing to the athletic commissions in the three US states where Mr Johnson was allowed to fight while under Ontario suspension, asking them to honour our medical suspensions for safety reasons. Making sports safe for participants is Ontario's number one priority.

1510

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James) : J'ai une question pour M. Baird, le ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones.

Plus tôt dans la Chambre aujourd'hui, il y avait une question faisant affaire avec les services en français pour la communauté d'Ottawa. Vous vous êtes fié sur la question d'offrir les services pour les francophones où les nombres le justifie. Mais c'est intéressant que plus tôt aujourd'hui, quand les médias vous ont posé la question, vous avez dit, « Je crois qu'il faut être très prudent avec la notion du bilinguisme là où les nombres le justifie. »

Ma question au ministre est très clair : Vous avez deux différents textes, un texte le matin quand vous parlez aux journalistes, et un texte totalement différent quand on vous pose la question à la Chambre. À qui pouvons-nous nous fier, les francophones en Ontario, si vous ne parlez pas pour nous ?

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones) : J'ai dit exactement la même chose dans la Chambre que dans les corridors avec les médias. C'est

bien sûr que les services sont offerts dans la région d'Ottawa-Carleton, dans toutes les villes où le nombre de francophones est suffisant pour offrir les services. La ville de Gloucester, la ville de Cumberland, la ville d'Ottawa, la ville de Vanier offrent toujours les services en français.

Je suis absolument sûr que, si la loi est adoptée, les services de qualité en français doivent être offerts. Je suis sûr que la grande majorité des citoyens dans Nepean, dans Gloucester, dans Ottawa, dans toute la région, dans toute la nouvelle ville d'Ottawa, vont appuyer la provision de bons services pour les francophones de la région.

M. Bisson : Ma question est encore au ministre, sur votre crédibilité. Vous avez deux différents dictons. Vous parlez un langage quand vous êtes en dehors de l'Assemblée, quand vous répondez aux journalistes. Vous avez dit que vous êtes un peu nerveux avec la question puis la notion d'offrir des services là où les nombres le justifient. Mais ici à l'Assemblée, vous nous dites quelque chose un peu différent.

Après ça, l'affaire qui m'inquiète vraiment, c'est que vous avez dit même juste jeudi, et je répète, que « Nous ne voulons pas une bande de juges, de bureaucrates, couper des cheveux en quatre sur une définition » quand on vous a posé la question. S'il n'y avait pas eu la capacité de la communauté francophone d'aller devant les juges, on aurait perdu l'hôpital Montfort.

Je vous demande une question très simple : êtes-vous notre porte-parole et notre protecteur envers votre cabinet quand ça vient aux services en français pour nous, les francophones de l'Ontario ? Oui ou non ?

L'hon M. Baird : La réponse à la question de mon collègue est bien sûr oui. Je parle toujours des intérêts des francophones de toute la province au Conseil exécutif et dans mon caucus. La provision de bons services en français est quelque chose d'important pour nous. On appuie la Loi sur les services en français, la Loi 8.

La région d'Ottawa-Carleton, pour nous, le gouvernement de l'Ontario, est déjà une des 23 régions désignées. Je suis absolument sûr que le conseil de la nouvelle ville va adopter une bonne politique pour être sûr que les services seront offerts dans les deux langues, le français et l'anglais. J'ai beaucoup de confiance en la nouvelle municipalité. Les conseils dans le passé ont offert les bons services en français. Comme député de la région et ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, je peux dire qu'on va suivre de très proche la situation pour nous assurer que les francophones continueront à recevoir les bons services en français.

WORKFARE

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. For the last two years the regional government of Ottawa-Carleton has been extremely successful at finding permanent jobs for welfare recipients. An average of 800 welfare recipients a month have found permanent work this

way. Meanwhile, your workfare plan has averaged about 500 people a month in temporary placements, and we all know where some of that leads.

Last week you announced new workfare quotas. The permanent jobs that are found by the region for their welfare recipients will not be counted in your workfare quotas. This will punish the region for being successful with their placement program.

In order to meet your new quotas, they will have to stop helping people to get off welfare. They will have to let them collect welfare and place a few of them in workfare programs. All of this, so that your numbers for your workfare program won't be so embarrassing. I ask you, why are you trying to prevent the region from getting permanent jobs for people on welfare?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I want to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre for the question. This government strongly believes in helping move people from welfare to work. It has been one of our fundamental priorities as a government. To date we have seen more than 462,000 people move from the welfare rolls, and we've seen substantial growth in job creation, with more than 600,000 jobs created.

What we believe is that a whole series of supports are needed to provide people with that transition from welfare to work. Through workfare and community placements, through earnfare, through learnfare, we have a substantial number of people taking a variety of supports to help them. What we're saying is that workfare has got to be part of that equation.

The regional municipality of Ottawa-Carleton has a \$4-million surplus in welfare this year. They are laying off case workers. If they feel they need additional resources to help people participate in community placements, we're certainly open to receiving requests through a \$10-million community innovation fund.

Mr Patten: Minister, you're not answering the question. I asked you how come you're jeopardizing and penalizing Ottawa-Carleton when they are creating jobs.

Interjection.

Mr Patten: They are so. He says it's silly. Listen to what the social services commissioner of Ottawa-Carleton says: "When I have an opportunity to get somebody a real job, I'm going to bypass the community placement," which is your workfare program because "that's the most effective thing for our clients. It's a good poverty reduction strategy and it's the best thing for the taxpayers of Ontario." That is the commissioner of social services for the region.

Interjection.

Mr Patten: Why? Because he's penalized going your way. Why won't you look at the formula? At least agree to look at the formula and see that it's prejudicial and is punishing Ottawa-Carleton for getting good jobs. Will you look at it?

Hon Mr Baird: I have certainly sat down with officials and heard this concern. We believe you can do both.

You can help people move from welfare to work and you can also help those others. More than 85% of people can take the avenue the region wants to take this year, with only a 15% goal to help take community placement.

Our party believes you can't leave anyone behind. We're not prepared to say that 85% of people can just sit there and wait while they take care of 15%. We have some significant differences on welfare reform. We want to help people move from welfare to work. Your party believes in a welfare reform policy written by an insurance adjuster. You just want to write people off and leave people behind. We don't believe in that policy. We believe you've got to provide supports to help people move from welfare to work, and we're going to continue to work to provide that support.

1520

PREMIER'S RESEARCH EXCELLENCE AWARD

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. Recently I attended a ceremony at Trent University in honour of Dr James Parker. Dr Parker was recognized for his outstanding research and will be receiving a Premier's Research Excellence Award for his work. It was not too long ago that another world-class researcher from Trent University, Dr Holger Hintelmann, also received that honour. Can you elaborate on the Premier's Research Excellence Award and tell us a little bit more about it and how it works?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): The Premier's Research Excellence Awards is a \$75-million program, the first of its kind in Canada for a province and the first of its kind, certainly, in Ontario.

As part of this jobs cabinet and this jobs government, we are aiming to recession-proof ourselves and do the best we can in this province to get through the lows that may come from time to time in our economy. What we've focused on is research and development and particularly our young researchers, so each of our 128 recipients of the Premier's Research Excellence Award receives \$150,000. That money is some of the largest money given out in this country to individual researchers. It's used to attract more expert researchers to their teams, like Dr Parker and Dr Hintelmann.

Tonight, for example, the Premier will host, the first of its kind here in Ontario, an awards dinner to recognize the 128 excellent researchers in all areas of scientific endeavour who have applied for the program. It's a tremendous way for us to stop the brain drain, to turn it into a brain gain. More than just money is needed in research; we also have to recognize these talented young people so that they'll stay in Ontario and bring to us the great discoveries that will help us improve our quality of life here and around the world.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Minister, and there's absolutely no doubt after being involved with this twice. It

also suggests the type of university and the type of researchers and faculty that Trent University in my riding has, and this certainly has a very long-range ripple effect. I know that Dr Parker's project was in emotional intelligence and mental and physical health, and that Dr Hintelmann's work is in chemistry and environmental and resource studies. What other areas of research are covered under this award?

Hon Mr Wilson: All areas of legitimate scientific endeavour are able to apply for the award, but specifically the Premier's Research Excellence Award concentrates on physical, natural and life sciences, engineering, mathematics, health sciences and environmental sciences.

I think Dr Hintelmann's work from the Trent University is a very good example of the type of excellent research that is being conducted in this province. He is specifically looking at the relationship between atmospheric mercury deposits and mercury concentrations in fish. The research will determine the contribution of atmospheric mercury emissions to the high levels of mercury that are observed in many fish. It's breakthrough work that Dr Hintelmann is doing. Dr Parker's work is breakthrough work in the area of intelligence, and there are 126 other recipients tonight of the Premier's Research Excellence Award.

I hope members will take the time to congratulate those recipients who are from their ridings. They deserve your recognition, they deserve your support and they are our future. I know the honourable member from Peterborough is very proud, as he should be, of the recipients from his area of the province and I hope all members will join us in that recognition.

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question is for the minister responsible for the greater Toronto area. Two years ago the Harris government created the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Two years ago—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I need the name of a ministry.

Mr Smitherman: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Smitherman: Two years ago the Harris government created the Greater Toronto Services Board. Since then the GTSB has struggled to find a consensus on any given issue. This past Friday the Greater Toronto Services Board finally reached a consensus. Indeed the board voted 58 to one, and what was the issue that unified municipal politicians from Stouffville to Caledon, from Whitby and Ajax to Mississauga and to Milton? It was the Oak Ridges moraine. They united behind a demand to freeze new development on the Oak Ridges moraine until the province has a comprehensive policy in place to protect this environmentally sensitive land.

I ask the Minister, will you listen to the board your government created and freeze new development on the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for the question. He was in my riding a few days ago. I hope you had a good time in Brampton West-Mississauga and I hope you learned a little bit about the issues that are out there.

With respect to the question, I would disagree with the honourable member. I think the Greater Toronto Services Board has found a lot of consensus on other issues such as transit and the need to have an integrated transit plan, which is precisely why the board was set up in the first place, so they're moving on with the job and I congratulate them on that.

With respect to the issue the honourable member has raised, there was a motion passed. We have a bit of a disagreement in terms of interpretation. I think the essence of the motion, as I read it, was that they were interested in a policy statement rather than a freeze. I would encourage the honourable member to correct the record for this House in terms of the tenor of the motion. At that time, I'd be happy to answer the question.

Mr Smitherman: It seems that the minister is mistaken. While the minister writes letters supporting unsustainable development, pristine wilderness lands and freshwater resources are being lost forever. The solution is clear. We have said so, Uxbridge has said so, Durham region has said so, the GTA mayors and chairs have said so and now the Greater Toronto Services Board, a body created by your own government, has said so. This is what they moved:

"The Greater Toronto Services Board urges the province of Ontario to ensure that no more approvals be given to proposed development or aggregate applications going through the process for six months in the Oak Ridges moraine, and that during that period the province, in collaboration with the regions, prepare a policy statement for the Oak Ridges moraine."

Freeze development on the moraine until you have a comprehensive plan in place. That's what they said. I ask the minister again: Will he stand up for ordinary Ontarians instead of developers and implement a policy to save and not pave the Oak Ridges moraine?

Hon Mr Clement: That the honourable member's caucus is interested in this issue is astounding, considering their complete lack of sophistication and interest in this issue before.

But I would say to the honourable member that any resolution that is passed by the GTSB or its constituent municipalities is something of interest to this government. We are willing to take that information, and we will take it seriously. We will examine it, and we will make sure that it is consistent with the public policy objectives, which I think the honourable member and I share. We are all looking for ways to ensure that we have sustainable water supplies and sustainable environmental controls. So environmental preservation is our top

priority, along with the fact that the way you get environmental preservation is to have prosperity, growth, jobs and opportunity.

The honourable members on the other side are so good at saying, "We want to freeze development; we want to freeze prosperity."

The Deputy Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Clement: On this side of the House, we are looking for solutions that guarantee prosperity as well as an environmental record of which we can all be proud. This is what we on this side of the House stand for.

MOHAWK RACEWAY

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. Minister, as you know, Mohawk Raceway is located in my riding, the great riding of Halton, and was long considered to be one of the premier standardbred horse racing tracks in North America. Since its opening in 1963, championship horses, such as Cam Fella, Matts Scooter, Peace Corps and Canada's 1996 co-Horses of the Year, Riaydh and When U Wish Upon A Star, have all raced at Mohawk's track, along with an under-recognized but terrific little horse called Dr Charlotte W. raised at Mohawk and named after Charlotte Whitton, former mayor of Ottawa. These horses have been driven by some of the greatest drivers in Canada, who now call Halton their home: Steve Conlon, Rick Zenon—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Question?

Mr Chudleigh: —Ron Waples—great drivers.

Minister, can you tell me if you've had any feedback from the horse racing industry on how this has affected the industry as a whole?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): That's an excellent question from the member from Halton. Yes, I'm pleased to report to the House and to the member that we've received a lot of very positive feedback from the horse racing industry in Ontario. As you know, under previous governments' policies of overtaxation, the horse industry in Ontario was facing a lot of competition and not faring very well against other jurisdictions in North America. But the feedback we've gotten because of the implementation of slot machines and the decrease in the tax rate is that we have a real increase in horse racing activity in this province. We've seen activity in ownership of horses increasing. Top stallions are returning from the United States back to Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mr Hodgson: Leading owners are indicating that they may even be moving their stables and farms to Ontario next year instead of the United States, and new farms are being built. We're restoring this industry to its historical ranking of being the best in the world.

1530

Mr Chudleigh: That's great news for my constituents in Halton. I have been hearing that this initiative, the addition of slot machines, has been very successful for

Mohawk Raceway. Attendance figures are rising. Horse wagering is up 27%. Purse levels have increased 10% from this time last year.

I had the opportunity to attend the Breeders' Cup earlier this year, in October, and some of the finest trotters and pacers from all of North America were there to entertain and to compete for some very serious purses. It's great once again to see the parking lot at Mohawk Raceway full.

The Deputy Speaker: Question.

Mr Chudleigh: Minister, given that Mohawk is the economic stimulant for many Milton-area farmers and other businesses, can you tell the residents of Milton how this increase in revenues for the industry will benefit the agricultural sector and the rest of Ontario's taxpayers?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'd be glad to. This initiative has been good news for all of Ontario, in particular rural Ontario. It has greatly assisted the agricultural economy. As members in this House would know, and those outside this House should know, horseracing is the third-largest contributor to the agricultural economy in this province. They purchase \$18 million annually in supplies from the agri-food business. So that's a great news announcement for rural Ontario.

But the whole province benefits as well from this initiative of creating over 7,000 new jobs in the province of Ontario, as well as being able to give \$100 million to charities throughout Ontario to help those worthy causes. There's also \$10 million annually to be invested into addiction research and programs, and 5% for the host municipality. I think it's a win-win situation for the people of Ontario, especially rural Ontario.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Because cancer treatment centres in southern Ontario can't accommodate the waiting list for cancer patients, your government pays the full cost of transportation, accommodation and meals for cancer patients who have to go to the Thunder Bay cancer treatment centre.

Donna Graham is a cancer patient from Pickle Lake, Ontario. She has to drive a total of 1,100 kilometres to get to Thunder Bay for treatment of cancer. She has to pick up costs of transportation, meals and hotel. Your government will not cover her to the same benefit as a cancer patient from southern Ontario.

Minister, don't you believe that she should receive the same benefit? Is she somehow a second-class citizen as a cancer patient from northern Ontario?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I don't believe that any patient should be a second-class patient in the province of Ontario.

Mr Hampton: Deputy Premier, that is the reality. For her to fly from Pickle Lake to Thunder Bay on a Monday for cancer treatment and go home again on Friday would cost \$518. The northern health travel grant won't come anywhere near that in terms of its funding support. If she

has to stay overnight in a hotel, she has to pick up that cost, \$70 a night. She also has to pick up the food costs for that. Yet your government pays all the costs for a cancer patient—Patient X—flying from Toronto.

Why the difference, Deputy Premier? They're both suffering from cancer. They both need cancer treatment. For one patient you pay the full costs, all of the travel costs. The other patient has to find money out of their pocket to cover the cost of transportation and accommodation, and sometimes they don't have it. Sometimes they have to drive 1,000 kilometres over an icy highway because they don't have the money to cover airfare. Why the difference? Why are some cancer patients treated much better than other cancer patients by your government, Minister?

Hon Mr Eves: I'll refer this supplementary to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As I've said before in this House, it's this government's intention to ensure that people across Ontario, and importantly northern Ontario, have access to health care services close to home, and it's certainly our strategy to improve access in areas across the northwest and northeast so they can get services in the hospitals close by.

If the member wants to pass the details on the individual to me, I can refer that to the Ministry of Health to ensure that people get access to care as quickly as possible and are treated on a fair basis. My understanding is that Cancer Care Ontario, with respect to cancer patients who need treatment soon, has the authority to move those patients to where they can get treatment the best way possible and as quickly as possible to ensure that they have that important access to radiation therapy so they can come back into good physical condition as soon as possible. So I invite the member opposite to do such.

Again, this government remains committed to ensuring that patients across Ontario, and importantly northern Ontario, get access to the best possible quality care as close to home as possible.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Speaker: In order to be able to perhaps get to some form of public hearings on Bill 25, I seek unanimous consent to proceed with Bill 25 notwithstanding the printing requirements of the standing orders.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it agreed? It is not agreed.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Do you think the people of Ontario are stupid, or what, Norm? Do you think they're going to buy that garbage?

The Deputy Speaker: I'd ask the member for Sudbury to talk properly.

VISITOR

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): On a point of order, Speaker: I wanted to draw the attention of all members to the fact that we have a very distinguished

visitor here today. The Prime Minister of Burma, in exile, is visiting us today. I'm sure all members would want to pass along our respects and our congratulations to him.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I wonder if the Chair can inform the House when Bill 25 will be printed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Speaker cannot speculate on your wondering.

Mr Duncan: Mr Speaker, I have a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: A different point of order?

Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent of the House to ask the government House leader when Bill 25 will be printed and available for members of the Legislature and the public to read. I wonder if we'll know when that—

The Deputy Speaker: It's OK.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On the point of order—

The Deputy Speaker: I don't take debate on points of order.

Is there consent? No, there's not consent.

Hon Mr Sterling: On a point of order, Speaker: The bill was produced yesterday and given to the opposition members. It has been widely printed.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Sterling: Can you not make other copies? Go to your photocopier.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I observe that the Prime Minister thought it was better to get back to Burma than to put up with this.

If there are two of us standing up and I'm one of them, the other one's out of order.

The time for petitions has arrived.

Mr Duncan: I seek unanimous consent to have agreement that the House sit beginning January 3 to consider Bill 25 in public hearings.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: It is not agreed.

I think this debate would be much better carried within the rules, and the rules have that it will go in rotation under certain periods of time. So rather than just debating it back and forth, I'd like to bring us within the rules of the House. Right now, the rules of the House say we should have petitions.

1540

PETITIONS

SMALL CLAIMS COURT

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): J'ai devant moi une pétition à présenter devant l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario. Elle se lit comme suit :

"Whereas the oath of office for deputy judge (under the Courts of Justice Act, 1984)

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully, and to the best of my skill and knowledge, execute the duties of a deputy judge of the Small Claims Court of Ontario. So help me God."

"Whereas lawyers representing clients are causing an alarming conflict of interest;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"1. The oath of office should include the word 'impartiality.'

"2. Only lay people should represent themselves or be represented by lay people. Lawyers should be prohibited to represent clients at small claims court."

This is a petition that I offer.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas children are exposed to sexually explicit material in variety stores and video rental outlets;

"Whereas bylaws vary from city to city and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposures to sexually explicit material;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact legislation which will:

"Create uniform standards in Ontario to prevent minors from being exposed to sexually explicit material in retail establishments;

"Make it illegal to sell, rent, or loan sexually explicit materials to minors."

I have also signed the petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have more petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north

which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to: acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

This is signed by literally hundreds of my constituents.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driver licencing fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario, respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

This is signed by a number of residents from Blenheim, Tilbury and Chatham and I affix my name to it.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition here that reads like this:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I am in full agreement with this, and I affix my signature to this petition.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I continue to receive petitions from Cathy Walker, who is the director of health and safety department of the Canadian Auto Workers Union, on behalf of their tens of thousands of Ontario members. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens);

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances in work;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

On behalf of my NDP caucus colleagues, I add my name to those of these petitioners.

AIR QUALITY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have a rather lengthy petition. I'll read it in part.

To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the effluent coming from the commercial alcohol ethanol plant is creating a noxious smell in the former city of Chatham, in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, which has a nauseating impact on the citizens who breathe it in;

"Whereas the citizens of Chatham have repeatedly brought this problem to the attention of the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the former MPP for Chatham-Kent;

"Whereas the former MPP for Chatham-Kent and the Ministry of the Environment indicated that Commercial Alcohols was given and eight-month period to correct the problem, which time elapsed on July 1999, and the problem has not been remedied;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the measures contained in regulation 346 of the Environmental Protection Act be immediately enforced on Commercial Alcohols Inc to ensure that the citizens of Chatham and surrounding area have fresh air to breathe, free from the noxious odours that are spewed by the ethanol plant located on Bloomfield Road in the westerly outskirts of the former city of Chatham in the municipality of Chatham-Kent, and we ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I affix my signature to this.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS

EN CE QUI CONCERNE

LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ

ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 6, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Questions and comments on Mr Conway's speech of yesterday?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I actually rise to continue the debate. I know we are in the session for two-minute questions and comments. Not having been here

yesterday to hear Mr Conway's comments—I'm sure they were quite interesting and eloquent, as Mr Conway often is—obviously I can't respond directly to what Mr Conway said.

I look forward to continuing debate today on Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system. More specifically, I look forward to addressing the whole subject matter which Bill 23 allows us to properly continue, which is of course hospital restructuring. We've been on a four-year process to restructure the hospital sector in Ontario. Granted, it has not been an easy process over the past four years. There has been some upheaval in the hospital sector across the province and in those areas where the restructuring commission has been.

I might add that I think it's important to note the opposition seems to lead people to think this bill expands the ministry's authority outside of those areas that have been restructured, and it's not the case. In fact this bill only applies to those communities—I believe there were 22—across the province where the restructuring commission had been. Those include Brant county and Essex county, London, Waterloo and Niagara, which is my own county. I look forward to talking about the restructuring debate, especially as it relates to my riding. That's an important point. We must all remember that this bill pertains to those 22 communities in which the restructuring commission has issued an order.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to conclude my remarks, which in the main were made last night, to thank those people who have offered some opinions in response by simply summarizing my main concerns. We have before us today Bill 23, which essentially, in part III, transfers the directive-making and related powers for the merger and closure and other changes to public hospitals that previously belonged with the Health Services Restructuring Commission to the minister.

I want to conclude by highlighting the points I was trying to make last night. It was three years ago that, under the Harris government, a commission came to my community and ordered the nearly 100-year-old Pembroke Civic Hospital closed. They did so on the basis of so-called professional analysis that said all of the hospital-related services were to be consolidated at the site of the Pembroke General for a cost estimated to be \$5 million. Less than three years later the estimated cost of the actual renovation is four and a half, nearly five times as great, now estimated at nearly \$24 million. Our local share under the best scenario has risen from \$1.5 million to nearly \$8 million. That is a huge burden being imposed on our community, Pembroke and area, by the Harris government.

The analysis appears to have been deeply flawed, the injury significant. The upset and the stress in the hospital and health services delivery system in Pembroke and area is palpable.

To whom do we go for redress? The action was decisive, the fallout even more so, and largely in the negative. There are huge financial and health delivery problems associated with this.

I stand here and say that the people of Pembroke and area expect and will demand that the Harris government, which has been the architect of this disaster, will come forward with some extraordinary assistance to alleviate not only the financial but the health and hospital-related stress and problems caused therefrom.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Maves: I'm glad to rise today to speak to Bill 23. I look forward to speaking mostly about the restructuring of our hospital sector and how this bill allows that restructuring to continue.

I might add at the outset that there are many people in the hospital community. Actually I remember, just before the campaign started, the Liberal Party put out a red book and made an announcement that they were going to revue all decisions by the restructuring commission. In actual fact, after four years of hard work by district health councils all across the province and by the restructuring commission, that announcement was met with quite a bit of concern because people in the hospital community, the district health councils around the province, as I said, had worked so hard. There had been upheaval. Change is always difficult—we understand that—and a lot of people in the hospital community said: "No, let's not do that. We've made so much progress; it would be absolutely crazy to roll back all the successful work that's been done." I think that's very instructive. That was something that came out of a lot of people in the hospital community.

I note that there are some very supportive quotes from people from the hospital community. The CEO from the Sudbury Regional Hospital, Joseph De Mora, is quoted as saying, "I appreciate that your government had the courage to undertake long-overdue restructuring and ask you that you retain these powers to complete this important initiative." Those powers are those that we're talking about today and are included in Bill 23.

So there is someone from the Sudbury Regional Hospital, which had a great deal of debate in their community over the changes that were being made, that were advised by the hospital restructuring commission and are being made in the Sudbury area. But there is someone who is very supportive.

And there are others: David MacKinnon, the CEO for the Ontario Hospital Association. He wrote and said, "The minister needs to retain the authority to revise the restructuring commission directions in order to reflect patient care needs over time, new technology, opportunities to use new technology and other factors affecting patient care in communities across Ontario."

So again, this is David MacKinnon, the CEO from the Ontario Hospital Association, saying, "Yes, we understand the need for this bill; we understand the need for the minister to retain these powers so that this very

difficult but very vital restructuring component can continue."

I want to go back and talk about that restructuring process and probably talk mostly about my area of the province, the Niagara area, which of course encompasses the Niagara region of 400,000 people. We have 12 municipalities, plus the regional government. That's 13 municipal governments and 130 municipal officials, but 12 communities. I believe we have 10 hospitals in those communities.

Our district health council started many years ago. I believe the order actually came from the NDP government, and I think it was a responsible move by the previous government. They asked the district health councils throughout the province to get together and look at the hospital services in their catchment areas, as we like to call them. Our catchment area is the Niagara region.

1600

The district health councils, people watching at home should know, are just laymen from everyday walks of life, people who have nothing to do directly with hospitals. They are doctors, nurses, CEOs of hospitals, a broad cross-section of business people and labour people, people outside of the hospital sector who may just use it as consumers, residents of a catchment area, and then of course there are many people from the health care communities.

District health councils, at the behest of the previous government, set about to do reports on what changes should come about in the hospital sectors in each of their catchment areas. This was a long and difficult process. There were lots of public hearings. I believe in the Niagara region there were over 300 people who participated in the Niagara District Health Council reports. The district health council—I believe Bob Welch Jr was actually the chair of that committee—put out an initial report, which actually called for the closure or downsizing of several of the smaller hospitals in the region. After the first report, they went out and had some more hearings. When they had subsequent hearings in some of those areas, where the local district health council called for closures or severe downsizing of some of those more remote hospitals in my region, they got a lot of people who showed up at those meetings. Some people were obviously quite upset. They didn't want to see a hospital that maybe they had been born in and their kids had been born in and that had looked after some of their health care needs throughout their lives—they didn't want to see that brick and mortar lost. A lot of people showed up. But, very bravely, Mr Welch and the rest of the district health council came forward with the final report.

Based on that final report, the province-wide health restructuring commission later came down to the Niagara region and did a similar study. They didn't take as much time. They did have quite a bit of public input and they based a lot of their report on the district health council report. They made several changes to our system. Some of the very important changes that they recommended and that this province is carrying through with were

additional services for our region. Most notably, probably, a new cancer care centre, which we're all looking forward to, is going to come to the region. Right now our patients must go to Hamilton for that service. Similarly, we have mental health beds that our constituents have to go to Hamilton for, but those 57 beds, I believe, will be repatriated and brought back down to the Niagara region; and the cancer care centre will be built in Niagara. These are some of the important additional services the health restructuring commission ordered.

One of the most important things the restructuring commission is bringing to health services in my area is it's asking eight of the 10 hospitals to work together under one board. I think this is a fantastic recommendation. We've got great buy-in into this recommendation by most of the hospital community in the Niagara region. Everyone who works in the hospital sector agrees with this.

Over the years, we had developed two hospitals in St Catharines, one in Niagara Falls, one in Welland and one in Fort Erie. Over the years, hospitals were funded in Ontario is they worked from historic-based budgets. They serve a certain group of clientele, a certain catchment area in each hospital and over the years, historically, they had been funded by the Ministry of Health. They had a historic-based budget that was adjusted on an annual basis for a variety of things. Maybe a hospital would decide to buy a new piece of equipment and then offer a new service, and the Ministry of Health would agree to pay for the operational component of that new service. That's how budgets went. Quite frankly, the way we developed our hospital system in Ontario was really quite a hodgepodge of services.

Even in my region itself, with only 400,000 people, it was quite a hodgepodge of services. Some hospitals could decide to discontinue delivering some services; some added services. We had some of the smaller hospitals where people from that community would go to the hospital and check into the emergency department and their own family doctor would come to see them or the doctor on duty would see them and then package them off somewhere else. Those people would then go to Welland or Niagara Falls or St Catharines General or Hotel Dieu, bigger hospitals in the region, to get the service that maybe wasn't available at the smaller centre.

The question that came into play was, should we continue to offer very few services at some of these outlying hospitals and spend the money on the heat, the hydro and the janitorial services and so on for keeping those hospitals open which aren't really offering a lot of services? Or should we maybe take that money and send it in to those other hospitals—the Greater Niagara General, the Welland hospital, the St Catharines General hospital—and actually pay for more services? The underpinning of all the health council reports and the restructuring commission report was, "Let's look at spending less money on bricks and mortar, taking that money and reinvesting it into services."

Now, with one board—this is where I started. It's a topic where we can go on and on at some length. Where we started was with one board. We often had problems in our area of boards that didn't co-operate very well and health care administrations from hospital to hospital within my region that didn't co-operate very well. They didn't coordinate. If I couldn't get surgery in one hospital, the doctor would like that surgery to be booked in another hospital, but things got in the way between those administrations and that wouldn't come off. That affected patient care.

Emergency services, the same thing. We were redirecting. We started pouring some more money into emergency care services and we put strings on that money to make sure that each hospital spent it on emergency care services. We would have one hospital that wouldn't want to dip into that pool of money, perhaps, and would more quickly go on redirect or critical bypass and let those patients, maybe from St Catharines, be taken down to Niagara Falls for service. Once Niagara Falls found out that St Catharines hospitals were on redirect, maybe they weren't in a situation quite yet to be on redirect but they might not want to take in those patients, so they would go on redirect. It was not a positive situation.

One of the best things that has happened is we will have one administration. This administration will coordinate all health care for all Niagara residents. We'll be better able to allocate patients to the right emergency centre. Regardless of what municipality the person is from, they will be directed to the right facility in cases of emergency. We'll be able to better schedule surgeries. In fundraising, instead of competing with one another, we'll have common goals to raise money for certain machinery that everyone in the region can utilize and benefit from. So for a variety of reasons I think this is wonderful.

We have a transition team. There are eight hospitals in this new health system. There are two people from the boards of those eight hospitals on a transition committee. Just recently in my local paper I received a pamphlet, "Niagara Health System: Working Together for a Healthier Niagara." This was put out by this transition team to try and explain to people. It says, "There are exciting changes going on in the Niagara region, changes that will result in a stronger health care system with the resources to serve the community's needs into the next millennium." It goes on to talk about all the new beds, 87 new beds; \$56.8 million in new reinvestment. I'll just read from the transition committee's pamphlet. It says the reinvestment plan includes \$6 million for home care, \$28.6 million for long-term care, \$6.3 million for subacute care, \$7.7 million for mental health, \$6.3 million for rehabilitation, \$1 million for joint replacements, \$1 million for magnetic resonance imaging machinery and services, and so on.

1610

I'm very delighted to see it. I think it's a wonderful initiative that the transition board has undertaken to inform the public what's happening with health care restructuring in Niagara. It's a very positive piece. They

talk about new teaching and research in Niagara that is going to happen principally at the Hotel Dieu Hospital, in alliance with McMaster and the University of Western Ontario. This is going to be excellent because we need medical students.

As we know, we have a doctor distribution problem in Ontario. If we can get those medical students into areas like Niagara, learning in areas outside of Hamilton, Toronto, Ottawa, and I think London is the other one, then those people may start to enjoy and to see the benefits of being in a community outside of the major four and hopefully they'll decide to set up practices in communities outside the major four. That will help us with the doctor distribution problem. So I'm hopeful about that.

As I said, this is an excellent pamphlet, and I'd like to take this opportunity to commend my transition team.

When we first started in 1995, we said to the hospitals: "We're going to pull back a little of your budgets. We want you to become more efficient. We want you to make sure your operations are all running properly and efficiently."

Over time, what most people didn't seem to want to recognize, and what the opposition certainly didn't seem to want to talk about, was that after we asked the hospitals to streamline their operations, we then started very strategically and very intelligently, not just wantonly throwing money around, to redirect money to health care systems throughout the province.

Since 1995, the funding in Niagara region has increased by \$148 million. In a lot of those areas—as I said, it was very strategic—we knew there were, for instance, problems with hip and knee replacements, with having enough available surgeries for this.

I asked the Ministry of Health for some numbers on this. For instance, over the years 1996-97, we know that hip and knee replacements—it's an older population in Niagara region—were happening on a more frequent basis. In 1996-97 we put another \$8,400 into St Catharines General for hip and knee, \$18,000 into Greater Niagara General, and I believe Hotel Dieu, also in St Catharines, hip and knee replacements, \$211,000. That was in 1996-97.

In subsequent years, 1997-98, Greater Niagara General got an additional \$38,650. In 1997-98 at Hotel Dieu, an additional \$350,000 for hip and knee replacements. And it goes on. St Catharines General, 1997-98, an additional \$23,700.

There were a lot of other programs. St Catharines General, over that period of time of 1996 down to 2000 now, or 1999-2000, with the Y2K funding, has received about \$13.5 million injected into the system for a variety of things: mental health reinvestment, \$188,000; restructuring reimbursements; cardiac care—quite a bit in many hospitals for cardiac care—\$72,000 in 1997-98 in St Catharines General; kidney dialysis, an additional \$2.7 million in 1997-98, Hotel Dieu. Prior to that, 1996-97, an additional \$1.7 million for kidney dialysis. In 1998-99, another \$2.7 million.

So a substantial amount of money went into funding direct services, not just throwing money at the bottom line, at the base budget, but very strategically. We said to the hospitals, "Where is it that you have funding pressures?" We looked at those funding pressures, we looked at the patient caseload, and that's what we funded.

Unfortunately, I think that type of reinvestment has gone unnoticed, unrecognized by the general public. Out of that \$148 million, just on a global basis, let me tell you and the people at home that we spent about \$500,000 on preschool speech and language. The Healthy Babies, Healthy Children initiative was \$766,000. Emergency room funding, \$2.4 million—a lot of people don't realize that. Because of some of the problems we've had in emergency rooms, we've added a lot of money back into the emergency room sector. Again, rather than just throwing it at base budgets and maybe letting it drift off into administration, we tied that money; they have to spend that in emergency rooms.

A lot of money went into Y2K readiness, \$9.3 million in my 10 hospitals down in the Niagara region; mental health, \$1.4 million; physician OHIP payments increase, 20 million additional dollars are spent in compensating physicians in the Niagara region alone since 1995; nursing funding, additional \$4.6 million; 60-hour stay for moms who have had children in a hospital, we've added an additional \$700,000; ER capital expansion, \$2 million.

So there's quite a bit of money; as I said, a total of \$148 million extra since 1995 that has gone back into the hospital and health care system in the Niagara region. All of this was made possible because as some of these other people in the hospital sector have quoted today, we took the bold step of saying: "Look, we can't just keep throwing money at it. We can't just have a patchwork system. We need a coordinated system."

The NDP started down the right path with the district health councils, asking them to do studies and to tell us how to change our hospital systems so that they were more coordinated. We took those district health council reports, built on them with our restructuring commission and now we're making those changes. We're bringing our health care system into the 21st century. I think that as we complete this restructuring, we'll have a better health care system for all throughout the province.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): As I listened to my colleague from Niagara Falls comment on this bill, it confirms what Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals have been saying all along. This is a huge omnibus bill, which is of course the direction in which the government has always gone. They throw everything into it.

As I listened carefully, I don't think he had the opportunity to comment on some of the most important parts of this bill because it is so huge. He has confirmed what we have said all along: You have to respect the democratic process, so that when we are making laws and when we are making any decisions, they must be amply debated, and we don't throw everything into it.

I haven't heard him mention one word about the tobacco aspect of this bill because of course it is so huge he was just concentrating on one aspect of it.

The fact is too, Mr Speaker, as you know, this bill has about three different parts to it and there is no way one can debate that. Also know, this was just introduced in December, just this month. The fact is we didn't have any sort of Legislative Assembly meeting for debate, and ramming it through and having a sitting until midnight is telling us really that there must be something this government is trying to hide.

My colleague from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke spoke very well about the restructuring process. That did not bring any help to his area; it brought more harm because the cost of restructuring and the cost of running the hospital there has run up to about four or five times more.

So where is this saving that they are talking about with the hospital restructuring? As a matter of fact, using the hospital restructuring board as a sham or as sort of a vehicle for the minister to do her thing is a way of sidestepping the democratic process and leaving the blame on others.

I want to say to my colleague over here that you must not continue violating the democratic process and must make sure we have ample time to debate this.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I want to respond to some of the comments that the member for Niagara Falls made. I was particularly struck when he talked about patient care. I thought of the crisis, quite frankly, that we're facing in my community in the broader Hamilton-Wentworth—soon to be Hamilton city—issues.

I've got headlines from the Hamilton Spectator from just last week: "Hospitals Will Stack Patients," and "Emergency Congestion Forces Hospitals to Act."

Let me say to the member that if this is your idea of high-quality patient care, then I shudder to think when you would decide this is a problem. The fact of the matter is that the money you cut, the hundreds of millions of dollars that you cut from the hospital system in the early part of your mandate, those problems you created, didn't just go away because there was an election or because you've decided now that you need to backfill a little bit of money into the health care system to cover your tracks. The reality is that it did incredible damage.

But then why would they care? This government is not worried about the average person; they're far more concerned about making sure that the billions of dollars that their wealthy friends want and got through the tax cut was delivered. That's far more important to the Mike Harris government than making sure that ordinary working stiff's and their families have the kind of health care system they need so when he talks about patients, I take a look at what's going on in Hamilton and other communities across Ontario, and when I think about the money his friends now have to buy private insurance I could see why they're in favour of it.

1620

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I want to commend the member for Niagara Falls for an outstanding presentation here this afternoon on Bill 23, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999. I think he made an excellent presentation. He obviously has a grasp of the issues and he has seen what restructuring has done to our health care system in Ontario. It has improved it.

We hear from members opposite that somehow restructuring is not positive, but it has been very positive. It has enabled the number of MRIs in Ontario to actually triple; we've seen them right across our province. The member for Scarborough-Rouge River this afternoon questioned where the savings were going, where the reinvestments were. Well, they're happening in his community. I'm from the same community he's from, the community of Scarborough, and we'll have an MRI at the General site of the Scarborough Hospital; it'll be up and going in January. I know he'll want to be there for that grand opening when that MRI is there.

We've seen 56 new emergency rooms added across the province, five new cancer care centres that are going to be included across the province, three new cardiac care centres. It's all about the patients in Ontario. That's what we're here for and that's what Bill 23 is about: improving the health care for the patients of Ontario. It's about putting patients first, and that's very important.

The member for Hamilton West also talked about the economy. The fact of the matter is that it's a strong economy that's helping to fund the health care system in our province, it's a strong economy that's helping to fund the education system and it's a strong economy that will continue to fund the health care and education systems in our province. It's jobs, and it's jobs that have been created by tax cuts in our province, 99 tax cuts in our province, over 640,000 new net jobs in our province. A strong economy equals a strong health care system.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I really must comment on the remarks I just heard. I'm most surprised at the remarks from the member of Scarborough Southwest. We've heard the list of where they've spent money, but unfortunately again they forget the other side of the equation.

Look at the news. Look at where they continue to be significant deficiencies in the system, serious deficiencies in the system. People in need of emergency service are being shipped all over the GTA because hospitals are not able to take patients with emergency needs.

Apart from that, across the province and certainly in my riding people are not better served by the health care system. Hospitals are slated to close. People have been very upset by that. How can the member from Scarborough Southwest stand there today and say that it's better in Ontario now than it was? That wasn't the message I got in May when I was going door to door. I would suggest that's one of the big reasons I'm here today, because people in my riding do not think they are being well served by the health care system in Ontario. I will stand

in the House as often as I have to to remind the government that that is indeed the case.

Think about the waiting lists for people who have cancer. This is a reality in the province of Ontario: Not even a third of the people with cancer in Ontario are getting the treatment they need within the required period of time.

The member across the way shakes his head. I guess he doesn't believe the facts, the auditor's report. This is a reality. It's deplorable what has happened in Ontario. I cannot support an act that has created the mayhem in the province and the poor service in the area of health care.

The Acting Speaker: Response, member from Niagara Falls?

Mr Maves: I thank all the members who responded to my speech. It's sad that the member from Hamilton always ends up on a rant about taxes and rich friends and other nonsense. One of the key problems he has in Hamilton is that Hamilton, with the teaching hospitals at McMaster, has a preponderance of specialists. What often happens is that people in areas like mine in the Niagara region will come up to Hamilton hospitals to get cancer care treatment, for mental health services. This whole restructuring commission is going to help alleviate some of the pressures in his own area, because we're repatriating those beds, as I said earlier, cancer care beds and mental health beds. That's going to relieve some of the pressure on that system in Hamilton.

But if we had sat back and not done anything and just said, "Let's close our eyes and throw money at everything; it'll be better in the morning when we wake up"—just go back and look at the headlines, anyone who wants to, in 1987, 1988, 1989 and in the early 1990s. They're all there for anyone to read. Under Elinor Caplan and the Liberal government, they were sending patients to Michigan, they were sending patients to Buffalo for cardiac care and for cancer care. All the newspaper articles are there for anyone to see.

Physician services: Physicians were leaving this province in record numbers right up till 1993. Since then, that has been on a steep decline. We still have a problem with distribution, but they're not leaving any more. We've made it a better place to work, live and raise a family so they're staying here.

I've talked a lot about CEOs, from the Ontario Hospital Association, from Sudbury Regional Hospital, from York County Hospital, from London Health Sciences Centre, from the Ottawa Hospital, and doctors, Dr Reddy in my own riding—everybody in the hospital sector has said it's brave to do the restructuring and they've applauded the government for having the courage to do this.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Mr Speaker, I'll be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

Here we go again—another one of your famous omnibus bills, one of these bills that shows the arrogance of this government and your total disregard for the integrity

and the duties we have to accomplish within this Legislature. This government is bent and determined on putting together these big mega-bills and also on stifling public debate. You tabled this legislation on December 3; two days later you set forth the notice that you're calling for debate. This is truly a government that has no regard for the legislative process.

This is a complex piece of legislation, too complex to be dealt with in a very short time. The first two parts of this bill are providing the government to take action against a person or a group who has caused negligence through a wrongful act or omission. The bill, though, specifically exempts physicians, hospitals and labs from being named in lawsuits, and this is something that I find most interesting. The bill exempts doctors acting within the scope of their practice. The bill exempts hospitals from action that occurs from their providing services. It exempts laboratories that are licensed to provide those actions. But this bill says nothing about nurses.

Why doctors? Why not nurses? Does this mean that if a doctor orders a nurse to do a service, the nurse could be sued and the doctor could not? The bill says nothing about technicians, nothing about administrators. There's nothing about pharmacists, dieticians, orderlies. The existence of these exemptions is most intriguing because it implies that other groups are open for a lawsuit from the province. It implies that some health care providers are shielded from legal action while others are not.

Where's the equity that's supposed to exist in legislation? More important, where does the line stop? If someone slips on a wet floor, will the government sue the person who washed the floor for the cost of a bandage and a crutch? When we take it beyond the hospital, if a company spreads rock salt on a highway and a car slips and crashes, will the government seek damages from that company or the person driving that salt truck?

1630

This is a very bad piece of legislation. It's too open-ended and it leaves it open for the flight of our imagination. There are many things, though, that need to be considered. Is this going to lead to the government suing automobile companies like Ford, Chrysler or General Motors for the health costs of automobile accidents? There are countless accidents every year—and it's great to see the Minister of Transportation in the room. We see the carnage that continues to take place on Highway 401. Is this opening the door for the government to try to recover some money? There are countless automobile accidents every year in this province, and this is going to be their method of recouping some of those monies from dangerous machines.

Does this mean that the government is going to consider the possibility of going after the makers of handguns or rifles? Is the government going to sue Beretta or Heckler or Smith and Wesson for the cost of gun-related injuries in this province? Are you going to go after Molson's and Sleeman's for lawsuits that result from their actions?

This whole piece of legislation is going to give so much control to the Minister of Health. I think it's very dangerous that we're putting ministers in a position where they can, with the stroke of a pen, decide the fate of a local hospital, decide the fate of how the citizens of this province have access to health care.

I live in a community that has witnessed the effects of your Health Services Restructuring Commission. I don't think you realize the damage that restructuring commission has done to a community. That restructuring commission came in and made these recommendations that were just totally ludicrous, made these recommendations to close two psychiatric hospitals, just close them.

One of the members opposite spoke earlier of the need to put people and the patient first, but that restructuring commission, in its announcements, did not do that. That restructuring commission, when its decision was announced, caused such anxiety for the patients of those hospitals because the way it came out was as if they were going to be put out on to the street. Think too of the anxiety you caused the people who work in these hospitals, men and women who've spent countless years working in those hospitals to all of a sudden find out that their jobs were going to be gone.

Think of the effect that has on local economies. How does somebody plan to buy a new car or plan to buy a new house when they don't know if they're going to have a job in the future? You say you're fixing the health care system. If anything, you're doing more damage to it.

I sat on a hospital board, and this is a shame. This government should be ashamed of what you're doing. You're causing hospitals to go into debt because you're cutting back. Hospitals have to go to the bank and borrow money, and that's wrong. It's shameful that a government would do that. You caused hospital beds to close. You've caused layoffs of all branches of staff within hospitals, and the shortages that still exist—you talk about emergency room care and new money. Well, we heard today how wonderful a job you're doing. It's terrible. You talk too about all of the nurses you're going to hire. Where are those nurses? The shortages that exist in hospitals across this province are dreadful. It's sad that you can stand up and talk about all of the wonderful things you're doing.

Go visit a hospital. Go see what's happening in the hospitals in this province. It's not the rosy picture that your spin doctors in the centre tell you. Go visit that hospital. Go talk to the nurse. Go talk to the maintenance staff. Better yet, go talk to the administrator, because the administrator is going to point out the damage that you're doing to hospitals. And you want to do further damage.

It's this omnibus mentality of bigger is better, that bigger municipalities are better, that bigger school boards are better. You're wrong. Bigger school boards aren't better. Bigger municipalities aren't better. Your goal is to give this control to the Minister of Health so that we're going to lose that autonomy of local hospital boards being part of that decision-making process, making sure

that the decisions they make are going to be in the best interests of the community that hospital serves.

But no, what you're going to do is we're going to see these mega-hospital boards that are not going to be accountable to local citizens, that are not going to be conscious of what needs to be done and what's best for the local community. I think that is really wrong, that you would go and take that direction as a government. You should slow down. Instead of ramming through these mega-omnibus pieces of legislation, why don't you sit down and take a real look at the health care system? As I said before, talk to the ones who are there on a day-to-day basis making the decisions, doing what's best for the hospital.

Your record: You're not leaving a good legacy for the future generations of this province. You're leaving a legacy of death. You're leaving a legacy of people not having access to doctors and to good health care. You're leaving a legacy of a mental health system that is totally in shambles. You should be ashamed of the direction in which you're going.

I hope you will sit back and take a serious look at what's in this legislation, and give some thought and some second thought to putting in place a good health care system for the 21st century and not a health care system that is a shambles, a health care system that is not benefiting to citizens of this province.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I'd certainly like to congratulate my colleague for the emotional passion he puts into his pleas. Truly, when you think about it, if there's one issue which should not be a partisan issue, surely it is the health care and the quality of health care that each and every citizen of this province deserves and should get.

I was very surprised to hear the member from Scarborough Southwest say earlier that a strong economy builds a strong health care system. That's what he said. Unfortunately that has not been the experience in Ontario. It could be. A strong economy definitely could lay the basis for a strong health care system. But I can think of no other issue over the last four and a half years that I have heard more about from my constituents than the failure of our health care system.

I'm sure that we on this side of the House aren't the only people hearing those kinds of complaints from the general public. I'm sure the government members are hearing this as well. Yet there seems to be a mentality about this issue by the government members that if, for example, there are only 15 hospitals in Toronto that aren't able to take emergency cases today, "Well, I guess it could be worse," or when the Minister of Health one day said here, "Well, at least now we are treating 35% of the people who need cancer radiation treatment within the prescribed four weeks." She was saying, "Well, it's better than the 32%, or less than one in three cancer patients who need radiation treatment that the Provincial Auditor talked about in his report."

In other words, there seems to be a mentality that things are bad and we're going to make them marginally

better in certain areas, and therefore we're really doing a good job. I, for one, totally reject that. If the government came in with a plan in cancer care and said, "It is going to be our goal and priority within the health care system that within two years from today everyone who needs radiation treatment for cancer will get it within the four weeks prescribed, and we're going to put our resources to work to make it happen in the various cancer treatment centres throughout Ontario," then I would say now you're on the right track, because we cannot do anything less for the citizens of Ontario than that.

1640

There are so many other areas, as well, where the government, if it was really concerned about the health care system, would be working towards finding solutions to the ever-growing problems.

In the Kingston area we have four excellent health care facilities and we are blessed by them. We are the smallest of the five medical science complexes in Ontario. We have the Kingston General Hospital that has operated for the last 150 years. We have the Hotel Dieu Hospital that has operated for about that period of time. People have been getting good care in both of those hospitals. We have a chronic care facility and a rehab facility at St Mary's of the Lake Hospital, which is now part of the Providence Continuing Care Centre, which also includes Providence Manor, which is a home for the aged. And we have a psychiatric hospital facility.

These hospitals have operated, as I said before, in many cases for many years. Hard-working, dedicated individuals, both from the medical side and from the other staff side, have done their best to provide the best health care for the community.

The health services restructuring committee visited there about three years ago now. Their decision, in effect, created a system of winners and losers between the hospitals that were going to expand and be relocated to a new site and the Hotel Dieu Hospital that lost and basically was told to get out of the health care system. That issue has divided our community like none other that I could think of. As a matter of fact, there was a petition taken up that so far has been signed by over 70,000 people in southeastern Ontario, not only from Kingston but elsewhere as well, asking the government to keep the hospital open.

The Hotel Dieu Hospital did a study and it had a report prepared which stated that if the current facilities could be kept open, then the bottom line for the community, as far as the community care dollars that had to be raised locally, could be taken from the \$30 million that is required under the health care restructuring plan to the \$2.9 million that they say is required if the current hospital is allowed to be renovated and allowed to stay open. As far as I know, these figures have never been refuted by the Ministry of Health.

I think that people out there should get a good understanding as to what this is all about. This is all about raising money for the capital expenditures of these newly constructed hospitals out of the local community. Thirty

per cent of the capital money is required to be raised locally. I know you can fund-raise all you want, but in a community like the Kingston area, you will never raise \$30 million from that community. The population base simply isn't large enough. Since there are many other communities going through the same thing in Ontario, the ability to raise this money elsewhere from national and provincial foundations is going to be extremely limited.

We also have a good indication that by the time the new facility gets built, we're probably talking not about \$90 million to build it, but closer to \$145 million, which means that locally we would have to raise about \$50 million. The people of Ontario, the people of my area and the people across the province had better be aware of the fact that a lot of these local dollars are going to be raised, in effect, by their local councils. Those local councils are going to be approached to put a tax hike in effect in those communities, and my community is one of them, so that the \$30 million or \$40 million or \$50 million that has to be raised will be raised on the local property tax base.

To my way of thinking, there's never been that kind of debate. We've heard a lot of debate here about the downloading of services on local municipalities. We know it's happening. Just talk to your local councils, just talk to the people who get the local services and the kind of services they have to pay for now through user fees etc. I think everybody will agree that as a result of all this shifting in responsibilities there is a much greater pressure on the property tax base than there's ever been before. This is going to be an additional pressure. These local dollars are going to have to be raised somehow and nobody is going to tell me that the kind of money that we're talking about across the province can be raised by bake sales and other good events.

The Provincial Auditor himself in his latest report clearly indicates that the \$2.1 billion that the health care restructuring commission says has to be raised for all these capital projects is going to be \$1.8 billion short. By the way, that confirms the \$145 million that I'm talking about for the Kingston area, as far as this capital construction. It's about 50% more. As far as the Provincial Auditor is concerned, you're going to have to raise about 50% more money for the capital construction of the hospital facilities than the health services restructuring commission has estimated.

I guess what I'm saying more than anything else is that the health services restructuring commission really got the cart before the horse. If they initially had set out a program or built the necessary facilities or set up the programs for the community care facilities that they talked about, because we all realize people may not have to stay in a hospital as long as they did in days gone by, then perhaps once those community care facilities and programs were in place, you could start cutting back on some of the hospital services. But to close hospitals before the alternative care facilities and programs are out there for the people has created great havoc in the prov-

ince. As a matter of fact, you may recall that last year there were many people in the Kingston area who were cut off from home care, from the nursing care that they used to get at home from the VON and from other services because the money simply wasn't available.

It's a disaster, and this government, by this bill, is just continuing that disaster.

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the remarks from the members for Elgin-Middlesex-London and Kingston and the Islands.

I wanted to pick up a bit on one of the focuses that the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London put forward and that was the whole notion—I don't think it's gotten quite the attention that it should—that our hospitals are so underfunded as a result of the first round of cuts. I know the government doesn't like to talk about that, but there was \$800 million that you took out of the hospital system and you didn't put it back into community care to make sure that what was deinstitutionalized, if you will, was caught up and taken care of on the community side of health care. You're real good at taking the money out, not very good at reinvesting it back in.

The member in his remarks said that hospitals are now forced to go to banks to cover off their deficit. This is true. We have faced the same scenario in Hamilton with the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp—exactly the same situation. What's important is that this has never happened in the history of Ontario before.

I would say to the members on the government back benches, you can appreciate why we get upset when you suggest that it's either an innocuous thing or a wonderful thing that the minister gets to carry on the powers and mandate of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, when in fact it's your whole vision of health care in Ontario that has our hospitals running deficits and going to banks in order to provide enough money to run our hospitals on a day-to-day basis. To us, this is insanity.

Mr Newman: I listened intently to the member for Kingston and the Islands and the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, their doom-and-gloom, the-sky-is-falling speeches on health care. That's the typical speech that we hear from the Liberals.

What we heard today was that they would have done nothing to the health care system in Ontario. That's what they would have done. They had no plan; they had no policy.

1650

Dalton McGuinty, the leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, and the members of his caucus who ran for office in the 1999 election, said they were going to review all the decisions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission: 1,200 decisions affecting over 100 hospitals in 22 communities. How would they have been able to do that? They would have needed a bill just like the bill that's before the House today in order to have accomplished that. They know that and they're not being up-front about it.

It's just like where Dalton McGuinty stands on restructuring in Ottawa. He says he's in favour of a single

tier of city government in Ottawa, yet we saw him in the House yesterday voting against it. So the Liberal way is to say one thing one day and one thing another. That's what being a Liberal is all about.

Their plan for health care in 1995 was to only spend \$17 billion. We have increased health care spending each and every year since we've been in office in this province. We made a commitment in the last campaign, the 1999 campaign, to increase health care spending by 20% in our province.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Despite federal cuts.

Mr Newman: Yes, the only health care cuts that happened in Ontario were health care cuts by Jean Chrétien and the federal Liberal Party in Ottawa. They are the ones who were cutting health care. Our government was the one actually putting more money into health care. Today we're spending \$20.6 billion on health care. That figure is going to be increased by 20% over the next four years in office.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I am pleased to join in the debate and congratulate the two speakers from our party, because I have had some similar incidents in my community.

The previous speaker for the government side talked about not keeping promises. I would just like to reminisce a little bit with him. A number of years ago, when Mike Harris was running for the Tory party and was asked if it was his plan to close hospitals, he said, "It's not my plan to close hospitals." Talk about talking out of both sides of your mouth—there's a perfect instance.

In my community we have the same situation as they have in Kingston. It split the community right down the centre. We have the Hotel Dieu Hospital on a large parcel of land, lots of room for parking and expansion and all that goes along with it. The other hospital, that's going to be the main hospital in our community, is in a residential area where land will have to be expropriated, and our community cannot afford all those costs. I think the government had better reconsider a lot of this. If they have all this money in reserve, in my community of Cornwall, we'll take a lot of it.

We also have doctor shortages. I served on the local hospital board a number of years ago and I understand the problems we had then. I know that right now they're a hundred times worse. We have residents who have to go to Ottawa for aneurysms. They can't get the accommodations they need and are worried and concerned. We have dialysis treatment patients who, although we have a new dialysis clinic in Cornwall, still have to go to Ottawa. These are many of the incidents we deal with and there are lots of problems ahead in health care. I've never seen so many in my years in politics.

Mr Maves: I rise to talk about some of the comments made by the member from Elgin-Middlesex and the member for Kingston and the Islands.

The member for Kingston and the Islands, it's interesting if you look back at what the people of Kingston actually said about the restructuring that happened there. On Kingston radio, Dr Barry Smith, dean of health sciences at Queen's University, said, "The commission's recommendations offer the best plan for health services in Kingston." T.J. Plunkett, professor emeritus of public admin at Queen's University, said: "The commission also recognized that a community the size of Kingston could neither justify nor sustain two acute-care hospitals. The existence of health care institutions on four different sites, each with separate governance and management arrangements, made not just a fragmented arrangement but an unnecessary multiplication of resources." Again, that was T.J. Plunkett, professor emeritus of public admin at Queen's.

Lastly, what did the Kingston Whig-Standard say about Mr Gerretsen's and Mr McGuinty's position on restructuring in Kingston? The Kingston Whig-Standard said: "The real heroic measures are being taken by the medical staff and administrators who continue to implement the plan. They deserve McGuinty's and Gerretsen's support, not their politicking." I think the member should really pay attention to what many esteemed people in his own community are telling him.

To the member from Elgin-Middlesex I'd just say quickly, we were in the hospitals. My wife and I have had two kids in our hospital over the past four years. One night I took myself and my kids to emergency services in our hospital with food poisoning. I've spent a lot of time with doctors and I've spent a lot of time with my CEO. I pay very close attention to what's happening in our hospitals.

When the member from Scarborough stood up and talked about the federal cuts, I noticed the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London—up went the book. He didn't want to hear about his federal cousins, who are the ones who really cut health care. We've increased it from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion. It's his federal cousins who have cut it.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Gerretsen: Certainly Mr Plunkett and Dr Barry Smith are two great Kingstonians who have added an awful lot to our community. But a person such as Duncan Sinclair, who happened to be my neighbour not too long ago in Kingston, said to me: "You know where the government made the biggest mistake in all of this? You should have put the community care facilities and programs into place first. That should have been the number one priority. Then you start looking at the hospital sector and see what rearrangements, what cuts can be made. You've got the cart before the horse."

I do not believe that governments ought to be in the business of in effect setting one excellent institution in the community against another excellent institution. That is precisely what you have done. It's not the health restructuring commission that we should be blaming here; we should be putting the blame right at the Minister of Health. She is responsible for the health care of the

people of Ontario. To in effect put it off on the health restructuring commission is just an attempt by the government to pass it off to another body. The responsibility lies with the cabinet. They are responsible for looking after the areas for which the people of Ontario have elected them.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: The Minister of Transportation should do the right thing. Rather than taking pleasant drives along the 401, he should be looking after the true transportation needs of this province. He should be looking after the people of Wolfe Island who are doing without their ferry today because of your incompetence. He should be dealing with the people of Amherst Island who have a second-rate ferry. You should be getting them a good ferry.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate, member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: First of all I'd like to thank the members of the Conservative—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Minister of Transportation.

Mr Christopherson: Do you want me to sit down so you can go? Let me at least start.

Let me say something, then you can heckle. That's usually the rule: You can heckle, but let me say something so you can heckle it.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, right, why follow the rules now?

Speaking of rules—thanks for my segue—I'm sure that anybody watching will be interested to know that once again the hammer has come down. We have legitimate concerns, on this side of the House, about you passing this bill in terms of its implications for health care. Right now I've just in the last three or four minutes been handed a time allocation motion that basically is going to shut down democracy in this place once again. It nails it all down. I won't read the whole thing—we're all very familiar with it—but basically what it's going to do is ensure that Bill 23 is indeed rammed through the House in the final days of the session, giving powers to the Minister of Health that we're going to have to live with for at least the balance of your term in government.

There comes a point where even you guys in the back benches—at this moment it is all guys—must be getting tired of the fact that there's so much—

1700

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): That's insulting. That's a generalization.

Interjection: It's a generalization.

Mr Christopherson: It's not a generalization. There are six guys. I can go further.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You don't want any more descriptions. We'll leave it at that.

My point is that when we raised, earlier today, concerns during question period about the undemocratic, anti-democratic tendency and nature of this government,

it hasn't abated one bit with the second term. It's still going to be the way that Mike Harris and the Tories want it, no matter what; no listening to anyone; they have all the answers. We know how they package this sort of positioning. They say: "We did consult. We did talk to people. That was the election. Now for the next four years we don't have to listen to anybody."

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I hear one of the members saying "Oh, oh." The fact of the matter is that I have heard more than just a couple of you stand up when we raised these concerns and state that you've already consulted with the people and you don't need to be consulting any more; you know what people want and, based on that, you decide that one democratic vote automatically translates into dictatorial powers for four years.

I'm just pointing out that this notice of motion is further evidence that you haven't changed your ways one bit and that you don't intend to listen to anyone, certainly not the elected representatives of this House who don't happen to be members of your party. At the very least, I would think that you've got an obligation to listen to what we have to say in terms of reflecting the needs of our communities, but you can hear the train coming down the track already.

Next, I think it was the member from Scarborough Southwest—have I got it right?

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: There we go. I told you you were famous. You're wrong all the time, but you're famous.

Since I was going to be doing our leadoff in the next rotation, I knew I'd have time to respond to one of his comments. He said it's disappointing when he listens to me because—correct me if I'm wrong, by the way, paraphrasing you. You were criticizing me and you were expressing disappointment because I was going into that same old rant again about—

Mr Newman: It wasn't me.

Mr Christopherson: It wasn't you? The member for Niagara Falls? OK. It could have been you. I bet you were thinking it. It was the member for Niagara Falls. If somebody wants to drag him out, then I'll address him. His comments are there in Hansard, on the record.

Again, he said he was disappointed that I was doing the usual rant about the tax cut and wealthy friends etc. The reason is that it's still the basic premise of why we are hurting in this province the way we are. You don't like to hear it, I know that, I accept that, but it doesn't change the fact that if you had not given those billions of dollars away during a time when you said the debt and deficit were the number one priority, a number of things would have been different.

Number one, the bond rating, the credit rating for the province of Ontario in the international bond markets, would have gone up since you took power from us, from the NDP, in 1995. But it hasn't, because international economists said it doesn't make any sense to make debt and deficit your number one priority and then turn around

and give away \$6 billion in tax cuts to the very wealthy at the same time you say you are going after the debt and deficit. So we're paying more on the international markets than we would otherwise because you did that.

What else? The fact is that if you had not given that tax cut to the very rich, you would not have needed to cut one dime from the budget of the province of Ontario, and our budget would have been balanced two years ago. You can't change that reality, because you chose a different course. You said it's more important to give the very well-off, the rich, the wealthy, call them what you will, those who are fortunate enough to do just fine by our system, thank you very much, billions of dollars more.

Of course, we know what the argument is. They're going to talk about trickle-down economics and supply-side economics and tell us that that has created investment and the boom and all that stuff. The reality is—and I see my good friend from Wentworth-Burlington giving me the thumbs up. He likes that slogan because it's one of his favourites. It might even be on his licence plate for all I know. What he chooses to ignore, and I'm surprised that he would choose to ignore it, coming from—I was going to say coming from an area right next to, but I guess, Toni, that's going to change a little bit soon, coming from the steel city. Sorry. I'm not trying to be smug; cute maybe, but not smug. It came out a little smug. My point is that coming from the steel city area, you know the reality is that our greatest demand is coming from the United States. The vast majority of things that we produce in our community, and I believe the chamber has a figure—correct me if I'm wrong—of around 80% of our manufactured goods, are exported to the United States. Your tax cut does absolutely nothing to increase that demand. It's all generated from the American side of things.

In fact, we were able to show—I raised it here just last week—that when you said you've cut the income tax but your revenue has gone up, now the numbers are catching up with you. Things take a while in an economy as big as ours. So now we're seeing that you're going to have a little over \$1 billion a year less in revenue from personal income taxes than you did last year. I can tell you, that \$1 billion is not coming from the average person who works at the steel mills in Hamilton. It's coming from the very wealthy, those who are getting tens of thousands of dollars of benefit out of your economic policies.

I would expect that at some moment somebody's going to say, "Yes, but that's got nothing to do with Bill 23." The fact of the matter is, it has everything to do with Bill 23, because Bill 23 is about health care, and health care and social services and education are the biggest part of the provincial budget. So in order to find the money that you've given to the wealthy, exacerbating the growing gap, you've got to cut into health care, and that's why you cut earlier, in your first mandate, \$800 million out of hospitals.

Two points: One, just to touch on the growing gap, I intend to continue raising the growing disparity between

those who have and those who don't have whether you like it or not, and so do the rest of my NDP colleagues, because that's the world you are, if not creating, then certainly supporting and exacerbating, a world that says those that have get more and those that don't have get less.

You can't make the argument that there's no linkage between the number of people who are sleeping on the streets homeless and the middle class, because there's a trend line here. The trend line for a very, very small percentage is, "Good times under Mike Harris." The trend line for the vast majority of working middle-class people, without even mentioning what you're doing to the poor, those who are already in poverty, but the trend line for the working middle class in terms of their income and their standard of living and their quality of life is down. There's no improvement for individual citizens in this province. The only ones who are winning are the very well-to-do.

The people who publish this are going to be coming out with an update to reflect what's happened in the 12 months since this was tabled, and I suspect that it's going to show, to one degree or another, that the trend lines are continuing. Those who are very well off will continue to do just fine by you, and the rest of the population is in serious trouble.

1710

I want to put on the record again that in 1997, the last date that these stats are available, the top 10 CEOs in Canada each brought home more than \$10 million. On average, the top 100 CEOs saw a 56% increase in their compensation. How many people in Mike Harris's Ontario do you think got a 56% wage increase over the last year? I want to say that this is not about denying that those who have extraordinary skills or those who work extra hard will receive a little more for their efforts. Such is the way of the world. But it's obscene to allow that category of citizens to have a 56% increase in their income when some of them are already making over \$10 million a year, while there are more and more people on the streets homeless.

If you're one of those lucky CEOs who got a 56% increase in their pay, I'm sure you're not nearly as worried about what's going on in the emergency room at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp or in any other community across Ontario as the people in my community are. Why? Because if you've got the bucks you can buy all the health care you want. You've got the disposable income. You can buy the best health care, not just in Canada because when you're talking about this kind of income and if your kid is sick, we would all do this. There are no limits when our children are sick, none.

If money is no object, all you care about is, where do they provide the service my child needs? Whatever it takes, including if you need to, and it sounds sort of fanciful but it happens, it's real, if you find it's somewhere halfway across the continent, then you're going to either jump on a plane or charter a plane and you're

going to make sure your kid gets that service. We all would.

The problem is there aren't very many citizens in my community of Hamilton who can do that. What they rely on is the public health care system, just like they rely on the public education system for the same reason. My constituents need to know that if at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning they need to rush their child to the hospital, the services they need in that emergency ward and throughout the hospital are going to be there for them, because if they aren't, if they're standing there not getting the service because the hospitals are understaffed because you cut the funding, they don't have the option of saying to their partner: "Come on, hon, let's get out of here. Let's exercise our other option."

There is no other option. Whether you legislate the opportunity for some kind of private health care, they don't have that kind of money. What they do is stand there in stark terror, wondering where they're going to get the help for their child.

In Hamilton there's now a policy—and there's some question. I realize that Scott Rowand has said it's not directly related to the deficit and far be it for me to suggest he's in any way wrong. But the fact of the matter is that I don't see, and I'm no health care expert, how you can make the argument on one hand that you're underfunded anywhere between \$25 million and \$40 million, and that any policy that is not the top kind of quality health care you want to provide isn't related to that funding cut, particularly when one of the procedures you brought in place clearly states no additional staff will be hired. That's not because less staff makes better health care; it's because they don't have enough money to hire the staff they need to properly execute this system, at least as far as I'm concerned.

I'm referring to the fact that patients are being placed in hallways and in sunrooms because the emergency wards are backed up so badly they need to get the bodies out of there. So it's now a formal policy at the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp that beds will be placed in hallways and in sunrooms.

I think we all know that probably happens from time to time. There are blips. I would think, just from a street-level analysis, that Friday nights and Saturday nights tend to be a lot busier in the emergency wards for rather obvious reasons than maybe other nights of the week, or perhaps you've had a very serious explosion not unlike what we had at Plastimet, another environmental health issue that you didn't give a damn enough about to call a public inquiry to find out all the things that were done and make sure we made corrections.

In those kinds of instances, I don't think it would be unreasonable to expect that they may have to put people out in a hallway as they're dealing with an immediate short-term surge of maybe two or three times the number of patients they might otherwise get at that time of day. That's not unreasonable. What is really disconcerting about this is that there's now a formal policy that makes being parked in a hallway or in a sunroom as normal as

being in a regular ward. I can tell you, Hamiltonians find this very distressing.

I made the comment at the time and I meant it: What happens if we continue down this road? A year from now we're parking people out on the parking lot? Maybe up on the roof? That may sound a little over the top but if you'd said to me five years ago that there would be a policy in place that said there were designated locations for people on gurneys in hallways or in sunrooms and oh, by the way, they're not going to hire any extra nursing staff to monitor them, I would have said that was over the top. Yet that's the world I'm in; that's the world we're all in. That's the reality of what's happening in Hamilton. That's the headline: "Hospitals will Stack Patients: Emergency Commission Forces Hospitals to Act." That's not as a result of a Plastimet tragedy or a horrific accident on the highway or a major fire. That's what's going on in our hospitals.

So Bill 23 continues your Health Services Restructuring Commission by virtue of giving all that power to the minister, rather than making us feel better—which the Toronto councillors have been trying to do—fills us with hope because what it means is, at the very least, more of the same. We don't want more of the same: a good place to talk about where we've been in terms of Bill 23, Bill 26 and the legislation as it once existed.

I know that government members will remember Bill 26, the big bill, the granddaddy of all omnibus bills, the one where ultimately we in the opposition benches—I mean it had the NDP and the Liberals working together—that's how serious it was. God know that doesn't happen lately. We worked together and, yes, we hijacked this place. We hijacked this Legislature because it was the only way to force you and it was right about this time of year. That would have been what? About 1995, in their first mandate.

So four years ago, right about now, you introduced Bill 26, that created the Health Services Restructuring Commission, as well as doing all kinds of other incredible things. You mandated—it had to be 20—bills. The only reason we hijacked this place is we were trying to force you to have a little bit of public input into this. That's all we were asking. It wasn't like there was a coup d'état going on in this place. All we wanted to do was to make sure that the public was given some opportunity to have a say, because your plan was to ram it through in the last two weeks of that sitting, just like you're doing now.

Prior to that, again on your record, the Minister of Health had considerable power, but not nearly what you gave future ministers. They could go in; they could have an investigation of a hospital; they could indeed take over a hospital or make orders regarding that hospital if there was a concern about the quality of care or the management in the hospital. Quite frankly, that makes perfectly good sense. Most pieces of legislation, certainly the legislation I lived under as a minister, contained those sorts of upset powers, if you will, the residual powers that a minister has to step in in the case of an emergency

or a situation that's unacceptable or endangers the health of the public, things of that nature. We all lived with that and there was a whole process, based on that legislation, that a minister of the day, a Minister of Health of an earlier time, up until 1995, would follow. And we all remember what happened to Frank Miller. Unfortunately, this government remembered what Frank Miller went through and they decided, "We're not going to that process. We want to do the same thing but we're not going to go through that process, so how do we go about it?"

1720

They brought in Bill 26. What did Bill 26 do? Instead of having the thresholds that I mentioned earlier that there has to be a real concern with the hospital, a problem with its management, a concern about the quality of care that they're delivering, rather than that being the threshold that allows the minister to step in and use their extraordinary powers, Bill 26 changed it to "it being in the public interest." Come on.

"In the public interest" would therefore be—what? That is the first question. What indeed is in the public interest? In the parliamentary system, in terms of triggering the extraordinary powers that a minister has to act directly vis-à-vis a hospital, "in the public interest" is defined as whatever the Minister of Health says it is. It might be the quality of care, it might be questions around the management of that hospital, but it doesn't have to be. It could be anything, they don't like the colour of the building—"in the public interest."

Then you created the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and we all know what a popular group that was all across our province. To listen to the government members, you'd swear that commission rolled into town and was handing out free money and everybody loved them and couldn't get close enough to the aura that was around them. Sometimes I wonder what province some of you live in. They went into communities and they cut budgets, they closed hospitals.

You're going to close the Hamilton Psychiatric Hospital. Chedoke emergency is already gone from Hamilton. St Peter's used to be a full-fledged acute care hospital. Now it's going to be a long-term care facility. We're lucky it's still in the non-profit sector, but there's no guarantee that's going to last for long. For that matter, even when the Health Services Restructuring Commission recommended that St Peter's be given all those beds in the first round, the minister who's supposed to be representing Hamilton—what a joke that is, if ever there was a joke around this place—the Honourable Cam Jackson, who represents Burlington, not Hamilton, in his capacity as the Minister of Long-Term Care—when he made the first round of announcements, St Peter's was left out it. It didn't get one. None.

It was their own restructuring commission that said they ought to get the beds, after they had already downsized it from a full acute care hospital to a long-term-care facility. The Health Services Restructuring Commission, as part of that downgrading, said, "Make sure you put long-term-care beds in there. Cam Jackson is in the

riding next door, is supposed to represent Hamilton, does have responsibility for long-term care, and doesn't give St Peter's any beds." That's how disorganized this whole process has been—as he enters the House now.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Sit down. Let's have a go at this.

The only reason we finally got those beds was because there was such a hue and cry in our community, and then the word came out slowly that the minister was going to see to it that they came around in the second round. They were there in the second round; they should have been there in the first round. That facility should never have been downgraded in the first place. These are some of the things—

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): On a point of order, Speaker: I think the record should confirm for the member opposite that it was his government that—

The Acting Speaker: No, no. That is not a point of order. Member for Hamilton West.

Hon Mr Jackson: Frances Lankin did it. That's the truth.

Mr Christopherson: I'll tell you what's the truth, Minister. I remember carrying the message into our community that the almost \$13 million that was needed to rebuild the south wing was finally going to be there after years and years and years of lobbying and hard work on the part of the people at St Peter's. That's what we did for that hospital. You, on the other hand, allowed them to go ahead and dig the hole for that expansion or that replacement of that wing and then cancelled the funding that we had announced for it that you had already incorporated into your budget. To the best of my knowledge, that bloody hole, the size of a football field and 25-feet deep, is still there. So I'm glad you joined the House.

Further to the announcement that this new policy had beds parked in the hallway and parked in sunrooms, there was a letter to the editor just today by—and I hope I'm saying this correctly—Dr Jeff Kolbasnik, actually from the riding of the member for Wentworth-Burlington. His letter reads this way, and I want to read it in part into the record:

"The recent disclosure by the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp that patients may be accommodated in hallways and sunrooms, rather than appropriate patient rooms, is an extension of existing cost-cutting measures at the corporation. These include reduction in staffing levels, diminished operating room time, and limits to radiological tests and other investigations.

"These measures have placed physicians and other health care personnel at the corporation in a terrible ethical dilemma: Do the interests of a community or group of patients supersede the needs of any individual patient?"

He goes on to say in part: "Nurses cannot look after patients appropriately in hallways and sunrooms, particularly at already inadequate staffing levels. The

mandate for aggressive patient discharging will force doctors to act against their better judgment, and resource limitations will lower the standard of patient care."

I want to stop just for a moment there and underscore the importance of that statement. I don't know this doctor. At least I'm not aware that I've met him. If I have, it has been in a crowded room. I certainly have no ongoing relationship of any sort. But Dr Kolbasnik—I'm butchering his name and I apologize; I think I'm going to call him Jeff—says, "The mandate for aggressive patient discharging will force doctors to act against their better judgment." Why I think that's significant is because every time there's a question to the Minister of Health about individual decisions, she can quite comfortably hide behind the fact that it will always be the physician who makes that decision; it will always be the doctor who makes that decision. Whenever she can she makes that statement. Here we have a doctor saying that all of these pressures around the physicians in the health care system affect the decisions they make.

Now, I'm not suggesting for one moment that any doctor would knowingly make a decision or a recommendation that puts the health care of their patient at risk in order to save money or because of dollars. But the doctor is saying—and that's why I'm reading it out; you don't hear it said this often, but I'll bet the docs talk about it a lot among themselves—"The mandate for aggressive patient discharging"—and that's the whole issue of being discharged quicker and sicker, and there are growing numbers of Ontarians who know what that means—"will force doctors to act against their better judgment, and resource limitations will lower the standard of patient care."

1730

Yet this government would have us believe everything's wonderful, lots and lots of money, all the policies we could possibly hope for. It's all just gloom and doom on this side of the House; we don't know what we're talking about. They would spin that whole world, yet there is a doctor from the Hamilton-Wentworth area saying that these cuts affect his decision-making.

He goes on to say:

"We must all accept the primacy of patient well-being in medical decision-making. We cannot condone fiscally sound, yet medically inappropriate decisions.

"In this case, the interests of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp cannot supersede the needs of the individual patients that it serves."

I think that's quite profound, and yet now we find out the government thinks so little of our health care system that they've introduced a time allocation motion. There goes democracy; here comes the hammer. Ram it through. Déjà vu. Been there, done that, got the T-shirt.

Mr Scott Rowand went on, following my disclosure of this new policy, to write an op-ed piece in the Hamilton Spectator on December 3, of this year, obviously. He points out a very important fact for those of us in the Hamilton-Wentworth area in terms of health care. It also came up at a recent briefing that was sponsored by the

Hamilton Academy of Medicine. I want to give the docs a whole lot of credit. I've now been in this position for over nine years, and on regional council prior to that for five years, and during that time I was on the district health council, so I've had a fair bit of exposure to our health care system and the people who administer it. It's the first time ever that one of the disciplines within health care had pulled all of the disciplines, or at least many of the disciplines, together and sat down with the elected representatives and made a presentation on the various perspectives and involvement that their discipline has within the health care system.

I give them enormous marks because the fact is that in the past—and I don't fault anyone individually; this is just the way it works and has worked in our pluralistic system—the docs would lobby you based on what they see. They may say outright, but they might suggest where they think some of the problem areas are. When you met with hospital administrators, they would do the same thing. When you met with the nurses, they would do the same thing. You had to pick through it all to decide for yourself what is the accurate reflection of what's going on in the health care system in your community. Again, their credit, the docs pulled in not all of them yet—I don't believe the nurses made a presentation, Toni. I don't know if they did that day, and that's a perspective that needs to be heard from; the support staff. There were a number of other areas where I think they could improve. Nonetheless, it was a huge step forward to have the hospital administrators make a presentation, then the families make a presentation, then the docs who are the specialists, then the experts in our cancer care centre.

Personally, I walked away from that feeling like, number one, we're on the right track here in terms of how we ought to go about decision-making in our community for health care, and secondly, like I had a clearer picture of what was going on in our community.

I would ask of Skarica, who is in the House now—I see him nodding his head, that he felt the same way. We go to these things in our community in a very non-partisan fashion. We either wait until the cameras or the elections are over and then we go at each other, but when we're doing the people's business, if you will, we do the best we can to be non-partisan. I think all of us felt this was a positive exercise and one that we hope they continue.

The reason I mention it is because one of the most important things I thought came out of that briefing was the reinforcement of the message and of the fact that we are, on a per capita basis, underfunded in the Hamilton-Wentworth area. The solution that was offered up by virtually everyone who was presenting that day was that if we went to a needs-based funding formula, communities like ours that have greater challenges, greater health care needs to be met, would have the appropriate level of funding with which to do that. I raise Mr Rowand's article because in part he speaks to that. I'd like to enter that into the record also. Mr Rowand says:

"We live in a region that is significantly below the provincial average for hospital care funding. Funding for hospitals in central west stands at \$586.86 per person." Of course Hamilton is within that central west area. "The provincial average is \$668.45 per person. At the same time, multiple studies released over the past year point to higher rates of cancer, heart disease and respiratory illness in Hamilton. In our view, it is time for a new funding system based on needs, not on past utilization which locks in historical underfunding."

Keep in mind that in a number of significant health care service areas, Hamilton is the centre of a much broader catchment area. It's not just Hamiltonians who use our health care facilities in Hamilton. In many cases it's people from far-flung communities who are just part of our catchment area. It's not as if the challenges were just Hamilton's or caused by Hamiltonians, but the resulting underfunding leaves Hamiltonians having less money overall for their health care needs. Is that just an opposition member ranting, as was suggested earlier by the member for Niagara Falls? No. That was coming from all those people I mentioned earlier at that briefing session and here in writing by Scott Rowand, who, if I didn't say it, is the president and CEO of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp.

Again, what is the provincial average per capita? It is \$668.45. What is it in central west, which is of course the larger catchment area? In central west it stands at \$586.86. That's hospital care funding. Yet the government tells us everything's wonderful. We know from the auditor's report that there are far too many Ontarians who are on waiting lists longer than the recommended time period to receive cancer treatment. Why don't any of you want to talk about that?

Where are we heading with all this? I can't imagine that we're heading anywhere other than Mike Harris taking us to a two-tiered privatized system. I realize there have been all kinds of disclaimers and the Premier and the Minister of Health will say over and over, "No, that's not our plan; it's not in the cards," and yet we can't continue down this road. We can't. My God, we're at the point where we're parking patients in beds in hallways, in sunrooms, because there's not enough room in the wards, and that's now a policy.

1740

All we need to do if we want to see where we're heading is to take a look at what's going on with Ralph Klein, good old Ralphie. Premier Klein not long ago announced in his Legislature that he was going to be looking at what amounts to, of course, a two-tiered privatized system. Why is he doing this and why is the opposition upset about it in the province of Alberta? What happened, as I watched the news the night he made the announcement, was that the opposition leader was asking the Premier—actually he was attacking the Premier—on the issue of going to privatized health care and saying it's wrong, especially given the fact that our universal health care system was created and originated in the West, not in Alberta but in Saskatchewan, certainly in

Western Canada and they feel strongly. They feel the attachment. They wanted to know why the government was turning its back on universal health care in Alberta.

It was interesting. I watched the clip from their Legislature myself, so it's not some kind of note or a newspaper clipping. I watched the Premier respond. To me it said it all. What he said, and I'm paraphrasing, was that obviously the opposition didn't care that there were longer waiting lists than were acceptable, that services were not being provided, first of all, in sufficient numbers and, secondly, in a timely fashion to the people of Alberta, and that, obviously the opposition didn't care about all of these pressures and crisis points that were now in the Alberta health care system, because if they did, they would understand why Premier Klein was doing this. Give me a break.

The reason they had all those problems and the reason there was a crisis in the publicly funded health care system was because Klein had cut it.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): The federal government cut it.

Mr Christopherson: My friend from Bruce-Grey keeps insisting that I acknowledge there were cuts from the federal Liberals to the provinces and I will do that. He is correct. That exacerbated all the problems in all the provinces. I agree. Now will you quit, Bill? He's right, though. It did exacerbate the situation. We faced it when we were in power and it certainly showed itself while you were in power. On the other hand, it didn't do you any harm a couple of years ago to receive a few billion dollars when things got loosened the other way, especially with an election coming. However, I won't go there. We'll stay with your point and that was it exacerbated the situation.

My point is that Premier Klein was accusing the opposition of being heartless because they weren't prepared to take the steps that he was, putting the health care needs of the people of Alberta first by making sure the services were there, and if it couldn't be provided from the public system, then why shouldn't it be provided for those who have the means from the private system?

Again, they knew they were going down this road. We know that's what happened in a lot of inner cities in the United States where the public health care system and the public education system—I would argue this is a parallel strategy; it works in both worlds. If you deteriorate the public system badly enough, to the point that when people criticize the public health care system or the education system, it's legitimate, so that when somebody says, "Every time I go into the hospital, I never get the services I need," or, "When I send my child to school, I'm worried about crime; I'm worried there's not enough textbooks; It's awful what's going on," once those kinds of complaints and concerns are true, it's not too far down the timeline when you can offer up the choice of an alternative. That's exactly what Premier Klein is doing.

When he said he cared about the citizens of Alberta and their health care needs, and he wanted to make sure they had a personal option, a personal choice—make a

special note of that. That will be one of the key things as these things start to creep into our political discussion and into our social system, the whole notion that this is about individual choice and therefore it's about democracy, ergo, Mike Harris is democratic and wants to give people choices. Watch for that. It's coming.

I think when we look at what Ralph Klein is doing in Alberta that is exactly where we're going to be at some point with this government. Will it be during this term of office? I don't know. Would it be in a future term of office? God help us, not another term of Mike Harris, please. We'll start those sets of prayers later into the new millennium.

The fact of the matter is that I think this is exactly where they're taking us. I don't think that in terms of the long-range planning of the Mike Harris Conservatives, the notion that the health care system will be seriously deteriorated and deteriorating, and the same within the education system—that's OK because they're ready with what they consider to be their trump card. That will be exactly what Ralph did. "We care about all those people the auditor has been pointing out for years," because that's what it will be. I'm sure there will be years and years of this. "We care about the fact that the auditor's report is showing that there are far too many Ontarians, growing numbers of Ontarians who are on waiting lists for cancer care services and therefore we're going to do something about it."

What will that something be? Will it be to fix the public system, even if that means money? No, it won't, not under this so-called Conservative government, but as we all know it's really a Reform mentality. This Reform Party mentality about health care and education is not about supporting and promoting an efficient, effective public health care system or public education system. It's about, at the end of the day, convincing Ontarians that they should have smaller government, because that's good for them, and all the other things that go with it. Meanwhile those arguments have the effect, when they come in the front door, of kicking the back door open to privatization. So privatize, corporatize and Americanize the whole system.

You know what happens at the end of the day when we get into that profit world in these areas? First of all, because 70% to 75% of all the health care costs are actually for salaries and benefits of the women and men who provide the services, they start to drop. They start to fall, and then the services start getting cut, and then the fees go up. At the end of the day—and this takes me to back to my opening comments about the growing gap—unless you're one of those who is in that lucky, small percentage of the population who are ahead of the game financially with Mike Harris's economics, you're screwed.

Mr Newman: Come on.

Mr Christopherson: No, it's true. It's true in terms of that's where people will be. You know what? There will be a growing number of people who won't at all have the option of your privatized system, so in some ways there will actually be almost a third tier. There will be those

who somehow function with the public system as it is, those who can afford the private system and God help the rest who are just sort of out there, pushed to the margins of society.

But you don't care about them, do you? Oh, well, I guess you do, because we'll debate that tonight, that evil threat that we all face day to day. I don't know how we sleep with this threat hanging over us—those squeegee kids—but you'll take care of them tonight when we debate that bill.

My point is, there's a growing underclass that goes along with this growing income gap. Wolfgang Ziegler is a very good friend of mine. He's a long-time retired teacher, well respected in Hamilton. It's his opinion that those of us who care and look at a progressive social democratic agenda have to be focusing on this primarily, because at the end of the day it's his belief, and I share it, that if we don't turn the trend lines around in terms of this growing income gap, everything else we do is in some ways redundant, especially as you continue to privatize things.

Now, if your bottom-line profit margin is built on X number of people accessing whatever it is you're selling, all you need to do is make sure that you can capture that crowd and that they have the means to pay the money to get into whatever it is—service or product—you're buying or producing, and you don't need to worry about everybody else. It's almost the way the Tories look at elections. As long as there's between 40% and 50% of the population that they think they can massage their message to appeal to, they don't really care much about the other 50%. They really don't.

I remember Bob Rae being criticized by a lot of people within the NDP because he refused to take that approach. On election night, he said that the history of Ontario is that when elected as a Premier or a government one does so for all of the people, that you don't just carve out everybody who voted against you, and there was a balance to how you would govern. Whether or not that was the right or wrong decision, history as it unfolds continues to analyze. But nonetheless, my point is that no Premier has ever taken the approach that "The only people who matter to me are the ones who vote for me and everybody else be damned." In large part, this is the world that we worry about. This is a world that the NDP worries about and rejects because it needn't be.

1750

I come full circle to the quotes that I provided earlier. Why and how could it ever be OK that the top 100 CEOs got a 56% increase in their compensation in 1997 at the same time there are growing numbers of people who are on the streets, that there is a housing crisis, that we are rapidly approaching an education crisis and a health care crisis?

That's not the Ontario that most of us in this place were raised in. That's not the Ontario that we want for the future; it's not at all. The fact is that as every year goes by under Mike Harris there are fewer and fewer people who will be joining the good life.

I don't understand why there isn't at least one of you in the back benches who at least touches on these things, at least acknowledges they're real, at least acknowledges you as an individual MPP give a damn about it, that at least it comes across your radar screen. I understand you've got to do what you do as government members. I've been there. I've sat there myself before I went into cabinet, and I know that you can't stray too far. But I can't believe you'd get in too much trouble for at least acknowledging that there are a few things going on in this province that you think—make up your own words—that you see as a challenge for your government and you hope they'll do something about. It really is becoming—and I'm going to use the word—pathetic that each of you gets up time after time after time and no one talks about these things. They're real.

There's a growing number of people on the streets. There's a growing number of people in the working middle-class world who are on the brink of being homeless, who are on the brink of being jobless. Surely it's not asking too much that you would at least acknowledge that these things exist. But it never happens. You only speak to that part of the population that you know you can to one degree or another appeal to to form a critical mass, which means getting a majority number of seats in this place. That is really distressing, because that's not the way it used to be, and that's certainly not why this is a great place to live.

I haven't even touched on the things you've done to environmental protection, labour laws, protection for women facing abuse. There's a whole host of areas I haven't even touched on that much of the same arguments still apply to.

I want to close my remarks by asking that the members who are here from the government begin to at least raise these questions in caucus. Maybe you are. I don't know. I would think that if you are, some of you would want to make a point of somehow making sure that that's getting out, that those of us who aren't in that caucus room have some assurance that you have some fear about what's happening to our public health care system, that you have some concern that what Ralph Klein has done is not something that you want to see in Ontario, because we don't see any sign of it from you, none whatsoever.

Bill 23 is merely a continuation of where we've been with this government in terms of health care. You've now given so much power to the Minister of Health that not only is this Legislature quickly becoming, if not irrelevant, certainly less important—and that's very much understating the case—than it was historically. It also means you're doing the same thing to our district health

councils, any citizen advisory groups that exist, professional groups. As more and more power is concentrated back in the cabinet room, the majority of you don't even get a say.

The toughest job in this place, I've always maintained—you can ask Toni; I told him the day he got elected—is government backbencher. It really is because, number one, you've got to defend decisions that you don't get a whole lot of input into, and you don't get to do much complaining or raising concerns about it. If you're in cabinet, you're dealt the cards. You can talk about these issues. You know what was rejected and why it was rejected, and you're a player. You're at the table, they're dealing you cards and you're a player.

If you're in the opposition, at least you get the opportunity to stand up and vent and point out where the government is wrong and point out the damage that's going to be done, none of which—with one or two exceptions I see over there—government members can do or will do.

I know you're in a tough spot, but don't you think it's about time that you turned that into an advantage by at least signaling to the rest of us in this province that you're not totally hoodwinked by the spin doctors and by the messaging that's coming from on high or out of the Premier's office? Just once in a while, one of you sprinkle your conversations with an acknowledgement that you've walked by somebody in Toronto who is homeless on the street, and maybe let us know that you recognize that it wasn't like that 20 years ago, and why is that today? The same with our health care system: that there are concerns in your community, that everything isn't all sweetness and light. And then, probably most of all, a recognition that continuing to concentrate more power in the hands of ministers and ramming these things through, as you did with the time allocation motion that was just tabled a while ago, is not in the long-term best interests of Ontarians.

I would just leave that with the government backbenchers and ask that where they can—because we don't hear it at all. It would be helpful and hopeful to know that some of you at least understand that the world is not nearly the way some of your spin doctors would have the province believe. Bill 23, for whatever time is left, may be an opportunity to do that.

Speaker, I thank you and the House for the opportunity of speaking.

The Acting Speaker: It being nearly 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 7 December 1999

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

World Trade Organization	
Mr Kwinter.....	1159
Municipal Recognition Awards	
Mrs Munro.....	1159
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Lalonde.....	1159
Mrs Boyer.....	1160
Ms Churley.....	1161
Ontario economy	
Mr Wettlaufer.....	1160
Literacy	
Mrs Dombrowsky.....	1160
Environmental research	
Mr Stewart.....	1160
Small business	
Mr Young.....	1161

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on general government	
Ms Mushinski.....	1161
Report adopted.....	1161

FIRST READINGS

Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act, Bill 27, Mr Eves	
Agreed to.....	1162
Mr Eves.....	1162
German Pioneers Day Act, 1999, Bill 28, Mr Wettlaufer	
Agreed to.....	1162
Mr Wettlaufer.....	1162
Ambulance Amendment Act (Minimum readiness), 1999, Mr Lalonde	
Agreed to.....	1162
Mr Lalonde.....	1162

MOTIONS

Private members' public business	
Mr Sterling.....	1163
Agreed to.....	1163

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Assistance to farmers	
Mr Hardeman.....	1163
Mr Hoy.....	1164
Mr Cleary.....	1164
Mr Hampton.....	1165

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Agreed to.....	1166
----------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Municipal restructuring	
Mr McGuinty.....	1166
Mr Clement.....	1167
Imperial Life Assurance	
Mr Hampton.....	1168
Mr Stockwell.....	1168
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Hampton.....	1169
Mr Clement.....	1169
French-language services	
Mr McGuinty.....	1169, 1172
Mr Baird.....	1170
Mr Bisson.....	1172
Highway improvement	
Mr Wood.....	1170
Mr Turnbull.....	1170
Emergency services	
Mrs McLeod.....	1171
Mr Eves.....	1171
Professional boxing	
Mr Galt.....	1171
Mr Runciman.....	1171
Workfare	
Mr Patten.....	1172
Mr Baird.....	1172
Premier's Research Excellence Award	
Mr Stewart.....	1173
Mr Wilson.....	1173
Oak Ridges moraine	
Mr Smitherman.....	1174
Mr Clement.....	1174
Mohawk Raceway	
Mr Chudleigh.....	1175
Mr Hodgson.....	1175
Cancer treatment	
Mr Hampton.....	1175
Mr Eves.....	1175
Mr Hudak.....	1176

PETITIONS

Small claims court	
Mrs Boyer.....	1177
Protection of minors	
Mr Cleary.....	1177
Northern health travel grant	
Mr Brown.....	1177
Mr Curling.....	1177
Highway safety	
Mr Hoy.....	1177
Occupational health and safety	
Mr Christopherson.....	1178
Air quality	
Mr Hoy.....	1178

SECOND READINGS

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 23, Mrs Witmer	
Mr Maves.....	1179, 1183, 1187
Mr Conway.....	1179
Mr Curling.....	1182
Mr Christopherson.....	1182, 1186, 1188
Mr Newman.....	1183, 1186
Mrs Dombrowsky.....	1183
Mr Peters.....	1184
Mr Gerretsen.....	1185, 1187
Mr Cleary.....	1187
Debate deemed adjourned.....	1195

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

The Deputy Speaker.....	1162
Mr Hampton.....	1176

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 7 décembre 1999

DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Restructuration des municipalités	
M ^{me} Boyer.....	1160

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois concernant les régimes de retraite, projet de loi 27, M. Eves	
Adoptée.....	1162
Loi de 1999 sur le Jour des pionniers allemands, projet de loi 28, M. Wettlaufer	
Adoptée.....	1162
Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances (disponibilité minimale), M. Lalonde	
Adoptée.....	1162

QUESTIONS ORALES

Services en français

M. McGuinty.....	1169
M. Baird.....	1170, 1172
M. Bisson.....	1172

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée, projet de loi 23, M^{me} Witmer	
Débat présumé ajourné.....	1195

No. 24B



Conversion
No. 24B

N° 24B

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 7 December 1999

Mardi 7 décembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 7 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 7 décembre 1999

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Martiniuk moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / *Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.*

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I will be sharing my time this evening with my distinguished colleague the member for Northumberland and also the ever-popular member for Durham, who will be arriving shortly.

This bill went to the standing committee on justice and social policy for public hearings. Various individuals and groups had the opportunity to voice their opinion, some nine presentations in all. I was the member on that committee for that period. No amendments to the bill were moved by any member of the committee; therefore, the bill stands as originally presented to this House.

All members will recall that the basis of this bill really goes back to the founder of our police systems, Sir Robert Peel, who in one of his nine principles—actually, his first principle—stated that it was the duty of the public and the police to control crime and disorder, not just crime as we know it but in fact disorder.

Why would disorder, as compared to crime, be important? I think in our many visits across this province, some 70 in all, as a co-commissioner of the Ontario Crime Control Commission, it became evident that people were concerned for themselves and their families and that disorder played a role in causing that concern. If there is disorder on our streets, people will vacate our streets out of concern for their safety and that void will be filled by additional crime. This is not a theory any longer. As a matter of fact, it has been proven, in my

opinion, in many different cities both in the US and the United Kingdom.

The Safe Streets Act is intended to protect the right of people in Ontario to use public places in safety. This includes driving down the road, window shopping along the sidewalk, strolling or playing with children in our parks. Individuals and families treasure the ability to do these things without being hassled, impeded or intimidated. If the Safe Streets Act passed, it would help communities control unsafe activities that interfere with the public use of the roads, sidewalks and other outdoor places. It would help enhance the quality of life in our communities. Leave us not forget that these public places have been constructed and are there for the use of the public and not necessarily for individuals seeking a fast dollar.

Bill 8 proposes to make it illegal to squeegee or conduct other commercial activity on the roadway. Towing and other emergency services would be exempt from this prohibition. The bill proposes to ban aggressive solicitation and solicitation where people cannot easily walk away, such as at bank machines or at bus stops.

The bill would also prohibit the disposal of dangerous objects, such as syringes, in outdoor places such as parks, schoolyards and laneways. One of the witnesses was a community leader in downtown Toronto with a neighbourhood group. She told us about the various problems and dangerous objects found in laneways and in schoolyards and voiced her and her association's concern for the safety of their children.

If the bill passes, police would have the power to arrest for these offences. This would supplement existing enforcement tools; namely, warnings and ticketing. Bill 8 would also allow courts to impose tough sentences for these offences: fines of up to \$500 or probation for a first conviction, and fines of up to \$1,000, probation or six months in jail for repeat offences.

The proposals in Bill 8 are a direct response to concerns from citizens and police about unsafe behaviour in public areas. Our government has heard from the people of Ontario through presentations to the Ontario crime commission and from letters sent to the Premier, as well as to myself and my predecessor. I myself have met with residents, business people and front-line police officers. I have heard over and over again how activities such as squeegeeing and aggressive solicitation have eroded people's sense of community safety.

Frequently, people ask the police for help, but current laws are totally inadequate. In turn, the police and

municipal leaders appealed to the province for legislation that would give them the tools they need to serve and protect the people of their communities. That's what we have done with Bill 8. We developed this legislation because we believe it is responsive and responsible leadership. We made the bill a priority because community safety is a priority for the people of Ontario.

There has been a lot of debate over Bill 8, both inside and outside this place. Unfortunately, the public has been subject to a lot of exaggeration and misinformation about the intent of Bill 8; this from critics with their own agendas. We have been told that the passage of the Safe Streets Act will somehow result in poor people being swept off the streets. We have heard that the bill would force the police to arrest Boy Scouts for selling apples and that it would make others think twice about asking for a quarter to use a phone. We have been told that if this bill comes into effect, street people will turn to crime, as that is the only available alternative.

Furthermore, there has been an undercurrent in the criticism that I quite frankly have found distasteful and certainly unfair. It has been implied that only so-called affluent people in Ontario care about the quality of life in our communities. Opponents of this bill would have us believe that ordinary people, regardless of their income, do not value their right to unrestricted passage on a roadway or sidewalk.

Just as unfair is the suggestion that some Ontarians are uncaring simply because they believe they should not be subject to verbal abuse after saying no to a solicitation or because they object to syringes, for instance, strewn along laneways and in parks.

We need to debunk such baseless concerns raised by those individuals who just don't like Bill 8. We need to get back to the heart of the matter. The proposed Safe Streets Act is about ensuring quality of life in our communities, and that benefits everyone. Make no mistake, the Safe Streets Act is about the public taking back their public places. It has absolutely nothing to do with the poor or the homeless.

First of all, if passed, Bill 8 would be provincial legislation. Only the federal government can enact criminal laws, and this therefore is not a criminal act. The proposed offences would be provincial offences, and persons convicted under the proposed Safe Streets Act would not carry a criminal record.

This bill also does not target the poor. If Bill 8 is enacted, no one, regardless of social circumstances, would be permitted to abuse someone whom they are trying to solicit. No one, regardless of social status, would be allowed to hang around the bank machine to solicit from a person withdrawing cash.

If the Safe Streets Act becomes law, it would be applied to control activities, not persons. It would be used to ensure safe access to public places for all the people of Ontario, no matter who they are, where they live or what they earn.

Some people claim that Bill 8 is not necessary. They say the federal Criminal Code already covers extreme

cases of aggressive solicitation. I believe that is absolutely incorrect.

1900

However, Bill 8 is not concerned with criminal activity. If someone commits a crime, the police can in fact make an arrest under the Criminal Code. Bill 8 is provincial legislation designed to regulate the use of our sidewalks, streets and other public places. It would ensure that members of the public are able to enjoy walking in their communities. People should be able to do so without anxiety, intimidation or harassment. They should not have to put up with having their paths blocked, being followed, being sworn at or being threatened. The Safe Streets Act, if passed, would help make our streets safe and secure for all members of the public.

The issues surrounding this bill are not cut and dried. I acknowledge that there are complex issues of homelessness and unemployment. However, I have also pointed out that this government spends millions each year on job training for our youth and adults, on housing and housing support, on services for people who are mentally ill. These services are available and accessible in communities across Ontario. This government remains committed to giving those in need the opportunity to improve their lives. It is unfortunate that some of the people who spend their time shouting down this bill don't use this time instead to encourage those people to use such services. These critics are also blind to the fact that the public and our government do care about people who are struggling.

Those short-sighted critics suggest that if you're a caring person, then it is somehow wrong for you to want to go about your business without being blocked by aggressive solicitation. They say it is wrong for you to want to pull up to an intersection in your car without having to worry about getting into an accident because of someone approaching with a squeegee. They say it is wrong to want your child to be able to play in a schoolyard without getting injured by a discarded syringe. I ask you this: Are such situations acceptable to the people who want us to do away with this bill?

The people of Ontario know what they want and what they value. They know if Bill 8 passes they will be able to build the kind of community life in which people are free to care about each other without having to worry about their own personal safety.

Bill 8 does not place a value judgment on individuals. It does not diminish the rights of anyone in Ontario. If the bill becomes law, it will help people to be safe and feel safe in their communities.

I want to stress that nothing in this bill prevents someone from soliciting for himself or herself or for others, provided that this is done without aggression or at locations where people are free to come and go. Nothing in this bill prevents unemployed people from using the many government programs that can help them train for a job and a better future. Nothing in this bill prevents anyone from giving money willingly.

The people of Ontario are caring and concerned. Hundreds of community groups and volunteers help

people of all backgrounds. This includes working with the homeless and the unemployed. Citizens do this because the sustaining force of community life is its capacity to bind us together. They want government action to deal with activities that interfere with their safety and the safety of their families and communities. Bill 8 is consistent with community values. Our government wants Ontario to be a safe place for individuals and for families. The passage of the Safe Streets Act would help us achieve this goal. I thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe there is unanimous consent to divide the time equally among the three caucuses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Further debate?

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I rise today to speak on behalf of the official opposition at this stage of debate on the safe streets bill. We oppose the bill on a number of grounds which I've already mentioned in this House and I will mention again.

But let me start out by saying this about this bill. To my mind, the safe streets bill, the squeegee bill, is symbolic of what this particular legislative session is all about. It's symbolic in the sense that we had an election on a number of very important issues. I'm sure on each side of the House we could at least agree that the issues were about the economy and jobs. I know the government would say also taxes, balancing the budget, also health care, education and justice. That's what the election was about. If there are some more issues I missed, I'm sure I'll be reminded in responses to what I have to say.

But those were the issues that I dealt with when I was at the doors during the election. St Paul's is considered a bellwether riding. It wasn't this time around, but it does provide a cross-section of opinion in Ontario, and I can tell you not one person said to me at the doors that what we really need to do first and foremost is bring forth a law that in effect criminalizes squeegeeing. Not once. It didn't come up in the all-candidates debates. It didn't come up in any of the questionnaires that were circulated. It never came up in terms of the thousands of phone calls and questions that we got.

Instead, what happened was that the safety of our streets became a growing issue, and I believe the thinking from the government was that squeegeeing was somehow symptomatic of a lower civility in our urban centre. They may have been right, that it is symptomatic of a lowering of civility in our urban centre.

Is it the most important issue? Is it the first criminal justice issue that we should be dealing with? I say no, and I'll pause on that point for a second before moving on, because we have the bill here and I plan on speaking to it. But of all the criminal justice issues that this government could have addressed in its first criminal justice bill, a Safe Streets Act on squeegeeing, I would have

thought, would have been at the bottom of the priority, not the top of the priority.

This is what I mean by it being a symbolic bill. Of all the issues that we had in front of us, we're not dealing with a growing number of guns in our cities; we're not dealing with the rise of domestic violence in the homes of Ontario; we're not dealing with hate crimes performed in shadows, never out front, in the dark; the vandalism to synagogues; and the assaults, apparently hate- and race-motivated, that have taken place in the city of Toronto. Nor are we dealing with the rise of commercial crime and house break-ins in certain sectors of the province. No. We're going to deal with squeegeeing.

My first submission, my first point, is that even within the criminal justice rubric, this should have been at the bottom of the priority, not at the top. As I go through the various submissions made by those who were gracious enough to come and speak to the committee, all nine of them, I'll be returning to this point. But I want to leave it behind.

1910

Let us say that if there has been something that has been in the news over and over again over the last few weeks and raised in this House over and over again, it has been the mockery of this government focusing on squeegees instead of the issues of the day. I find it insulting to the intelligence of voters that they would think this is at the forefront of Ontarians' concerns.

Now let me deal with the bill itself, because it's in front of us and it deserves our attention right now. Alan Borovoy, the general counsel to the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, came in and he did not simply give it a typical civil libertarian critique. He called the bill mean and silly. He pointed out flaws within the bill, assuming that in fact the bill was a valid venture. In other words, he agreed for the moment, for the purposes of the submission, that it made sense to bring forth a bill to try and make our streets safer.

Let me say right now that we on this side of the House support legislative measures and other measures to try and make our streets safer; there's no doubt about that. Our quarrel is not with respect to whether it ought to be done. Our quarrel is when and our quarrel is how and our quarrel, frankly, is why, and I'll get to that in a moment.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Are you going to vote for it?

Mr Bryant: No, we're not supporting it. The member for—you'll forgive me; I haven't memorized everybody's seat here—Haliburton-Victoria-Brock said, "Are you going to vote for it?" No. I've already said we're not going to support it, for the simple reason that, in a nutshell, the bill's not going to work. I would never encourage this party nor would I ever vote for a bill that is never going to work. I would never vote for a bill that, in the words of Alan Borovoy—and I think he's right on this front—is mean and silly.

Why did he say it was mean and silly? "Because," he said, "look at the way it's drafted." We opposed every single provision in the bill; there was no tinkering or

fixing a bill that was inherently flawed from top to bottom. He said: "Look at the fact that you could be at a payphone and missing a quarter. You ask for a quarter and you have to look around. Are there any police standing around?" It's sort of like when you're driving over the speed limit and you're looking to see—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Hey, hey.

Mr Bryant: Yes, I know.

You're looking to see if there's a speed trap. Similarly, you say, "Is a policeman around?" Because if he is and I ask for that quarter for the telephone, whether I be in Forest Hill Village or whether I be at a highway exit somewhere in Ontario, I'd have to look around because I wouldn't want to be arrested or fined or questioned or charged for asking for some help.

Granted, we know that what we're talking about here are anomalous examples, but nonetheless they exist. They're examples that were not in any way covered by the legislation.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): It's discretionary.

Mr Bryant: The honourable member mentions discretion. The discretion lies with the legislators and the drafting of the legislation. This was rushed through, rammed through, fast-tracked, and no attention was paid to the bill whatsoever, so much so—and I found this remarkable—that the definition of aggressive panhandling under the act has no provincial anchor. In other words, there's no reference to aggressive solicitation on the streets.

I'm sure that's what was intended. The bill's called the Safe Streets Act, so presumably aggressive solicitation on the streets is what's being prohibited. I know that was the intent, because that's all we've heard the government talk about, providing for safe streets, except that there's nothing in the act and nothing in the provisions whatsoever that limits "aggressive solicitation" to aggressive solicitation in public places or sidewalks or roads.

As Mr Borovoy pointed out, nor does it limit it to personal contact. In fact, if you read the provision, it could include—and there's no doubt about this—telephone solicitation. We've all received telephone solicitations from political parties or charities or from our telephone companies, and this is covered under the act. Again, the argument from the other side is, "Oh, come on, discretion's going to be exercised." Yes, but the responsibility for discretion to be exercised ought to be covered off in the legislation and not left open, as it is right now.

Mr John Fraser of the Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation came in. Mr Fraser was really concerned that what this bill was doing—and I don't know the intention of this government and I hope we hear tonight from this government that it's not its intention to do this, but the concern was that the old vagrancy laws that had been repealed in 1971 by the federal government and which had not been enforced in Canada at that time for over 20 years—it was at the time of debtors' prisons that the vagrancy laws were actually being used. The idea was that if you were poor or if you were somehow unattractive and we didn't want to see you, we'd get rid of

you. You were a vagrant and, literally, loitering and wandering around the streets and looking unseemly was a crime.

It may have been a crime in the early part of this century, but it's frightening to think that at the end of this century a vagrancy law that had never been prosecuted in over 50 years, over a half-century, would now be revived. Why would it be revived? Because a lot of what the people are doing on the streets, Mr Fraser said, a lot of what is unappealing to it—the fear Mr Fraser had was that people just didn't like the looks of the squeegee kids, with their nose rings and purple hair and half-shorts and aggressive manner; there was just something frightening about them and they were somehow vagrant and should be locked up. I hope that's not the intention. It would be frightening to think that this is in fact the revival of the vagrancy laws. Both Mr Fraser's and Mr Borovoy's prediction was that if it was ever interpreted by the courts as a vagrancy law, we would find that the law would be struck down.

Brian Enns and Andrea Earl of the Mennonite Central Committee came in and spoke about something which the government has called fearmongering. It's odd to accuse the Mennonite Central Committee of fearmongering. This committee and numerous others who work with the poor and work with street people have said the same thing. They said: "Look, we're talking about the marginalized of society. We're talking about a very tiny percentage of our population. They are at the margins right now. Yes, we'd love them to have jobs"—and I want to talk about these people as people, their stories, because we haven't talked about that today but we heard about it in the committee.

"These people are on the margins. Wouldn't it be nice if they had a job, but for one reason or another they don't and they can't. They have no fixed address. Some are mentally ill. Some are abusing substances. They need some treatment. They're just trying to survive. In trying to survive they have to spend time during the day and the evenings and they have to make enough money to feed themselves." This is what the committee said. They went on to say: "There are various options here. They can panhandle and they can squeegee. Those are options one and two."

"We don't condone those options," said the committee, and we in the Liberal Party don't condone those options. We don't want anybody in Ontario to either be forced to get their income through panhandling and squeegeeing nor do it at all. We don't, but it happens. We all know it happens. "Brother Can You Spare A Dime" is not a song that was written in the last six years.

1920

What are they going to do to make their money? "They can panhandle," said the committee, "they can squeegee, or they can turn to other forms of crime," and there are other forms of crime that they have turned to: the drug trade, the sex trade and breaking and entering.

So what they said—and this has created an ultimatum. In the view of the government it has created an unaccept-

able ultimatum. The ultimatum is this: "Look, either you let us panhandle and squeegee or we're going to be showing up at a neighbourhood near you with a crowbar." Quite rightly, the response to that ultimatum is: "No, no, no. We can't operate with a gun to the head as if criminality is the only option."

So it must be the responsibility of this government. When they take away panhandling and squeegeeing as an option for street kids, there must be something else they are going to be directing them to. If they know very well, *de facto*, that they are going to end up at a suburban neighbourhood near you with a crowbar, then surely their responsibility is to divert them into something which is not harmful and, even better, more productive, something that will lead them down the path of a more productive life. If this government is going to take the step of regulating this activity, then it has to take the further step that was taken in other jurisdictions—in the city of New York, in the city of Vancouver—other directions which will permit them to get a leg up, which will basically help them lead more productive lives. The government can either do nothing, the status quo—and I think we all agree that's unacceptable—or they can do something.

What they've done is they have created the penalties, they've created the punitive measures, without the alternatives. The only option for these people, supposedly, is that they'll go to jail. As I'll tell you in a moment, they're not going to be going to jail because no justice of the peace, no provincial prosecutor, no Highway Traffic Act prosecutor, none of them, none that I spoke to, none in my experience and none that anybody can imagine, is going to lock them up. When they don't lock people up for breaking and entering, do you think they're going to lock somebody up for putting a squeegee on a window? Of course not. They're going to send them right back out on the streets.

That's why I say, and I'll return to this point again and again, this act does nothing but throw the street people of Toronto and various other urban centres in Ontario into a revolving door of our criminal justice system. Yes, they get the charge, maybe they get the record, it's even harder to get a job, but no, that's what the government wants to do: It wants to sweep them under the rug.

The problem is this government has decided it wants to carry the ball on this but has not followed through on the commitment. The problem is that a year from now or two years from now we are going to see that the problem hasn't gone away. I'll be coming to that in a moment.

We don't need to look far. We just need to look over to Montreal, Quebec, to see that if all you do is provide the punitive measures without any alternatives and diversion avenues to direct these people, all you're going to do is shoo them from one street corner to another.

Gerri Orwin, the founding member of SOBRA, came in, and this was a residents' association which ostensibly supported the bill. They wanted an amendment to the minimum sentences under the act. They know, because they live in that neighbourhood, that a lot of people in that neighbourhood are being charged for a variety of

crimes but most of them are coming right back out on the streets. So what they wanted was a minimum charge and a minimum fine to ensure that these people were locked up, because the residents' associations in this area are desperate. Their parks and their streets are full of syringes. They live with the drug trade and the sex trade. They want to get rid of it.

The only problem with using this act to get rid of it is, you can't lock people up for life for squeegeeing, so you're going to have to deal with the fact that they may or may not go to jail but they are going to have to come back out. You're going to have to also deal with the fact that we don't even have a minimum sentence in this province for criminal negligence or homicide, so it's difficult to imagine we're going to have a minimum sentence for squeegeeing.

The point is, they wanted something done and they realized that, as it stood, this act was not going to solve the problem.

Low Income Families Together, Ms Walsh, came in and spoke about government training and how options other than squeegeeing are worse. Her concern was that by criminalizing this activity and not doing anything else to divert these people, we are just going to be sweeping them under the rug.

Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman came in. He spoke in favour of the bill, but his assumption, I know, is that resources are going to be provided to police squeegeeing and panhandling. Let me say with the greatest respect to Mr Kinsman, I can imagine a better use for the police of Toronto than spending their time doing surveillance to catch squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): What?

Mr Bryant: "What?" the honourable member says. How shall I count the ways? Homicide, domestic assault, use of guns, hate crimes, break and enter, injury to person, trespass to person—crimes that affect people more than a 15-second nuisance. There's no doubt it's a nuisance, and for many it's intimidating, but I would rather the police deal with those crimes than deal with the nuisance that is squeegeeing.

The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto provided a video with some human stories, and I'll be dealing with those in a second. Interestingly, the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law came in. They had done their homework. The government has not done their homework on this; they have had no response during this entire debate, if you want to call it that, to the charge that they have not done their homework and found out what these people are doing, what's going on out on the streets.

They did a study. They went out on the streets of Toronto and talked to squeegee people. Here were the conclusions of their study, having spoken with close to 100 squeegee kids. Most are young people; of those surveyed, two thirds were under 21. Most are homeless; 76% are homeless. There's this urban myth that somehow all squeegee kids are from Rosedale, they're misguided Rosedale kids; that's an empirical question, and

all the evidence we had before this committee was that it is entirely wrong. Maybe 1% of squeegee people are misguided Rosedalers, but 76% are homeless, according to the survey done this year. Many have left abusive homes. Many lack the job skills you obviously need to find employment. Most of them wanted to go back to school. The changes in the welfare law under Bill 142 made it much more difficult for 16- and 17-year-olds to obtain social assistance.

The other point made by the Canadian Foundation for Children, Youth and the Law was that enforcement was obviously going to be expensive. It is a lot more expensive to lock somebody up, and it's certainly a lot more expensive to arrest them, prosecute them, bring them before the court several times—because they'll have to appear before the court several times before one goes to trial, if in fact it goes that far, and I say it never would—and then lock them up. We all know that the costs of jail are a lot more than the costs of shelters.

The other point they made—and again, they went out on the streets and said, "What's going to happen if this bill passes and people go from person to person?" It's a highly visible activity, they said, one that will go underground—the less desirable will go underground—and it will be more costly to the community.

1930

I'd like to close with this: This government has read half the story here. They looked down south, as they often do, for their policy, to the city of New York. They found this thing called quality-of-life offences. These are the words of Mayor Giuliani; he enacted quality-of-life offences. And those are the words used by the Attorney General, "quality-of-life offences." In New York they include squeegeeing, panhandling, even jaywalking. The problem is that Giuliani put his money where his mouth is and he provided both punitive measures as a threat and a comprehensive social safety net. Both. If you don't believe me, ask Mayor Giuliani. There was a story in the New York Times last weekend. Here's what the Times story said. It was a story critical of Giuliani:

"The city of New York has legalized the right to shelter"—imagine that with this government—"and no city in America can touch the scope or the magnitude of benefits that New York city spreads amongst the poor." In other words, they used the midtown Manhattan core project, they used all their resources to take the squeegee people of New York City and put them into diversion programs: if they're mentally ill to get them treatment; if they needed mentoring or a job training program, they were sent there; if they wanted to go to school they were given access to schools that they couldn't otherwise get into. This is Mayor Giuliani, OK? We're not talking about a bleeding heart here.

I'm going to wrap up now. There's nothing in place today under this act, in this legislation, that will divert people off the streets and into healthier lives. Instead, squeegee kids are going to be thrown into the revolving door of the justice system and will be returning to a street corner near you. At best, Ontario cities will share the

same experience as Montreal, where the squeegee kids were shooed from one corner to the next. At worst, today's squeegee kid will be tomorrow's crowbar and crack head, thanks to the government's superficial, ham-handed effort to improve the safety of our streets. The bill is a joke. I don't mind the limited debate; I don't mind the fact that it's being fast-tracked. We need to see as soon as possible that this approach doesn't work. I look forward to seeing what alternatives are proposed by the government in the future because, mark my words, this bill won't work and it certainly won't get the support of the official opposition.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker. It is Niagara Centre. It used to be Welland-Thorold; now it's Niagara Centre.

This bill, Bill 8, is going to pass.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Another one of your telepathic moments.

Mr Kormos: Exactly. After a whole lot of analysis and thought, I realized Bill 8 is going to pass. Which leads me—look, you're going to help me, aren't you, Speaker? Because I have a feeling that from time to time I may digress; I may drift off point a little bit. I'm counting on you in your usual avuncular way to bring me back on track. I'm counting on you. I think you and I can co-operate to that extent. We've had our moments, and quite frankly I suspect I've felt the same way about you as you have about me, but tonight doesn't have to be acrimonious, Speaker. Tonight we can work together as a team.

Bill 8 is going to pass; I know it. I talked to one of my colleagues, and they said, "What's on tonight?" "Bill 8, the squeegee kid bill." "My God, the government hasn't abandoned that yet?" I said, "No, it's on for third reading." This is the response: "It's as if we had dealt with that like five year ago."

Over the course of this bill, from November 2, its first reading, I've talked to folks about this down in Niagara Centre. I had some folks at the Slovak Hall a few weeks ago, during a dinner there on a Sunday, because they had seen my comments, who said, "Come on, Pete, you've got to get tough on the squeegee kids." I said: "Fair enough. Tell me about it." This woman—a nice woman, a good woman, a very Christian woman, who comes to Toronto from time to time—says she finds it very annoying when she reaches the end of one of these north-south roads and gets down to the Gardiner or Front Street and is approached by sometimes two or three squeegee kids—because, you see, they compete with each other. They do. They compete with each other: who gets there first, who has the best spin, who has the best little approach. They compete.

I said: "I understand what you're saying. You find squeegee kids annoying. Far be it from me to tell you that you don't find them annoying." It's a very subjective evaluation. Who am I to tell her that it's not? Of course

she's annoyed by it. But gosh, I find those NCC billboards over on Bay Street real annoying.

Interjection: I like them.

Mr Kormos: Exactly. I would never suggest that you illegalize anybody's right, no matter how crackpot they are, to voice their views. I think the NCC has every right to spend as much money as it wants on billboards on Bay Street. The fact that I find it annoying should not inhibit their right to express their views. I respect the right of the National Citizens' Coalition to have their views expressed on billboards, no matter how much I disagree, no matter how annoying I find it, no matter how aggravating, sometimes outright intimidating—

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): You?

Mr Kormos: Well, sure. Some of the things they put on those billboards scare the daylight out of me. But they have every right to do it. You know what, my friends? I will defend their right to do it.

But my friend in Welland finds squeegee kids annoying. I said, "Fair enough, because you know what?" I told her what I'm going to tell you. "When I walk to Queen's Park in the morning and I encounter half a dozen panhandlers at 8:30 or 8 in the morning, you know what? I'm annoyed too."

I'm annoyed that over the course of a few years—I'm not annoyed, I'm outright ticked off, I'm extremely disturbed about the fact that over the course of a few years the number of panhandlers out there at 8 and 8:30 in the morning has tripled and quadrupled. I'm annoyed at the fact that there seems to be a clear increase in the number of people who find themselves homeless, here in Toronto and across the province. I'm annoyed that the programs that these people could have availed themselves of before this government aren't there any more.

I'm annoyed by the fact that the mental health services—and I admit that that problem goes back a good number of years, but it has deteriorated dramatically over the course of the last four and five years. I'm annoyed that mental health services, especially those outreach services, have been allowed to deteriorate and have been compacted or eliminated so that people with mental illnesses can't get housing, can't receive sufficient levels of support to enable them to live in appropriate and decent places and are forced out on to our streets panhandling and begging others for money.

1940

The other day I was walking past the Bank of Nova Scotia at the corner of Carlton and Yonge Streets, and a gentleman was there panhandling outside the ATM. What he was doing was, in a most gracious way—I suppose as graciously as you can when you're living on the street, when your clothes aren't quite Armani and when maybe you haven't had a chance to shower and shave that morning—this gentleman, as gracefully as he could, like a doorman at a hotel, was opening the door for people using the ATM. He'd hold out his hand as they left in the most passive of ways. I wasn't using the bank machine, but as I walked past, I stopped and I said, "Howdy," and I reached into my pocket and found a

toonie. For some reason I must have smiled, because he embarked on a lecture about how smiling releases endorphins, which are good for your health. My back was out at the time and I was walking with a little bit of a limp, and he said, "And it's good for you physically."

I thought, my God, this guy could be a U of T professor. The gentleman was an intelligent, articulate, mature person who engaged me in conversation at a level that was social and sociable and which I found quite pleasurable. I didn't ask him his story, but I reflected on the fact that here's a gentleman—yes, a gentleman—who could have been any one of the people in this chamber, because quite frankly there but for fortune go you or I, who was, for any number of reasons, and we could start listing them, out on the street homeless, poor, busted and broke. I didn't have any quarrel with the fact that he needed a little bit of help from his neighbour, because I was his neighbour at that moment.

I've got to tell you, I felt very privileged about the fact that I'm middle class enough and my income is more than sufficient that I didn't have to worry about giving this guy a toonie, that it in no way was going to upset or interrupt the quality of life I enjoy, that it wasn't going to mean any difference in terms of my weekly budgeting. I was privileged. I've been very fortunate. The people in this chamber have been very fortunate. They make incomes that are in the top percentiles of our society. My God, why don't those of us who are prosperous in this society understand that we've been privileged? We haven't necessarily been harder working—oh, I know the arguments—because let me tell you, there are a whole lot of hard-working people who are still also very poor. It isn't because we're any smarter. Let me tell you, there are a whole lot of smart people, smarter people than the people in this chamber, who are still very poor. It's as much about good fortune and good luck in this society, in this economy, as it is about anything else.

I say to myself that I'm blessed, I'm privileged, because for me to give this gentleman a toonie didn't require me to think twice about whether my financial straits for the week or the month were going to be upset by it. The fact that I could do that meant that I'm one of the very fortunate people in this economy and in this society.

As much as that gentleman is there by ill fortune and ill luck, not through sloth, not through laziness, not through lack of ambition, and certainly not through choice—who in their right mind would ever suggest that anybody chooses to be poor? Who in their right mind would ever propose that being poor is a matter of choice?

People don't choose to be poor. People are forced into poverty. How readily and how quickly? Well, just last Thursday Rosario Marchese and I were at West Lodge, two high-rise apartment buildings in Parkdale. These buildings, we're told, are owned by the Wynn family. They consist of two high-rises, built in the mid-1960s—you can tell by the architecture; it's that Bucharest-East German architecture—and they consist of, I'm told, 360 units per building, so 720 units. Rosario Marchese and I

were invited by John Clarke and OCAP to join with them and meet some of the tenants. OCAP of course is the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty. Mr Martiniuk knows John Clarke and OCAP. He was feted by them but a couple of weeks ago during his committee hearings on this Bill 8. You see, I have stayed on topic so far.

Rosario Marchese and I went to West Lodge, just west of Lansdowne, the Dufferin and Queen area. We entered the buildings—they're the sort of buildings we're all familiar with, as I say, those 1960s poured concrete buildings that in their day were perfectly fine buildings—and we started visiting tenants. We visited tenant after tenant after tenant and we saw the rent increase notices. We saw the rent increase notices which raised anywhere from 30% to 40% and 50% every single unit—from single rooms, would-be bachelorette units, where you assume that one person is going to live but where two and three people were living, through to single-bedroom and multi-bedroom units.

As if the rent increases weren't in themselves an adequate assault on those tenants, a complete cross-section of our society—students, adult students, new Canadians, long-time Canadians, young people, young families, senior citizens, retirees, persons with disabilities on this government's crummy ODSP program—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Talk to the recipients, sir, like we did. There were people working at low-wage jobs, some of them two and three jobs; people working and going to school as adults with little kids in their families and in their apartments, their homes, with these rent increases of 30% to 50%. Then we examined the apartments.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: We saw the rent increase notices, sir. Bear with me. You might find this narration interesting. I invite you to either of those two high-rise locations to view it for yourself.

1950

The first unit we went to, we talked to the male partner in the household. There were two little kids peeking out from behind his legs, one little boy, one little girl. He was telling us that for in excess of two months—and we saw the appliances, the fridges and stoves. They are as old as the building, well beyond their life on anybody's terms. But here, with two little kids and two adults—and this fellow happened to be an adult student upgrading himself, but working and upgrading himself, working at a minimum-wage job and trying to improve his education so maybe he had a little bit better chance at caring for his family and making sure his kids were able to do better than he did.

His mistake was that four weeks ago he advised the landlord that the stove had stopped working but for one burner. The oven didn't work and three of the four burners didn't work. I don't have to tell you, when you've got two little kids at home—and you don't order out when you're living on a minimum-wage income where you work part-time because you're going to school. You don't order out, nor do you dine out. His family was

reduced to one burner on the stove, but the mistake, you see, was to report the malfunctioning stove to the superintendent of the building.

The second mistake was, after a two-week-hiatus wait, to say: "Look, we need the stove. We've got to cook at home." The reaction to that was one of these rent increase notices, which meant that the rent wasn't paid because it constituted in this instance, overnight, almost a \$300 increase in rent, which meant an eviction notice. Let me tell you, this man and his family—this man, his partner, and his two little kids—within a matter of days will be yet four more homeless people—two homeless kids—on the streets of Toronto. They've been unable to find other accommodations, because there simply aren't any out there that fit into the budget that he has for rent. Never mind in the west end of Toronto—in any part of the city of Toronto.

That's where homeless people come from. That gentleman and his family are but days away from not only being homeless—look, this was a proud man. I'd be loath to tell you that he'll be a panhandler tomorrow, because his pride is so strong, but he's also a loving and caring man, and I know, after speaking with him for the length of time I did, that if he was forced to beg to make sure his children were fed, he would.

I'm just trying to illustrate where homeless people and where panhandlers come from. They don't come from a group of people who decide that as an avocation, as a lifestyle, they're going to pursue panhandling or that as a lifestyle they're going to live in an alleyway or a doorway bundled up in rags.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. If you have a conversation you'd like to carry on at that decibel level, I'd like you to do it outside the House.

Mr Kormos: We visited another apartment and met a young woman with a little two-month-old baby. I recall it because I asked her, "How old is the baby?" She was holding the baby, a beautiful baby, as all babies are. So here's a woman with a two-month-old baby, and she took us to her washroom, the bathtub and toilet, and pointed up at the ceiling—plaster ready, literally, to fall; the water seeping through; the outline of the toilet bowl from the bathroom above. You see, it wasn't sanitary water that was dripping; it was toilet waste. After over two years of complaining—here's a woman, and I was in her apartment, and notwithstanding the condition of her apartment, she maintained it in what was, trust me, compared to the housekeeping standards that I maintain in my own home, an impeccable standard.

Here's a woman with a two-month-old who lives with waste water seeping through the floor of the bathroom above, through her ceiling and down into her bathroom. When she sits there or whatever family member sits on their toilet bowl, they look up to see the dripping waste water from the toilet above. After two years of complaining to the superintendent, the response is a huge multi-hundred-dollar rent increase. Not a single effort to repair that bathroom ceiling.

I can tell you what it is. I know what it is. It's as likely as not the o-ring from the toilet above, the wax ring that goes in the toilet. In itself it's a \$2 item. You undo the two nuts on the side of the toilet bowl, you disconnect the water, you lift the toilet bowl, you pull out the old wax ring, put the new wax ring down, you put the toilet back down, seat it down, put the two nuts on—don't over-tighten or you'll crack the bowl. OK? My friends, what I'm trying to illustrate to you is that it wasn't an expensive or demanding repair request of the landlord that would have stopped the waste water from dripping down from the bathroom above. She has lived in those circumstances for two years, and in response to her efforts to persist at getting repairs that I tell you are her right, the response is a rent increase which she simply can't afford to pay.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Can she move?

Mr Kormos: I'm going to get to alternative accommodations in just a minute.

We visited another apartment where the young woman in the home had been seriously shocked, electrocuted, not to death, by using the electric stove.

Mr Marchese: A year ago.

Mr Kormos: The stove hasn't been used for a year. She's made the complaint to the landlord. You're talking about 220 volts in a kitchen. You're talking about somebody possibly dying because a slumlord, the owner of those properties on West Lodge—

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: As a matter of fact, I'm told the name is the Wynn family.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: My friends on the government side don't seem to take this very seriously. I find that regrettable. I find it incredibly regrettable. What I'm trying to relate to them, as a result of the modest effort that Rosario Marchese and I made, is where the homeless come from and where panhandlers might well come from. This woman is going to be forced out of her apartment with her two-month-old. She too has no place to go, and accommodations which meet her budget are not available to her.

We went to another apartment and talked to a mature woman who's crippled with arthritis. She's disabled. Her arthritis is so all-consuming that she can barely move around her apartment, never mind tell her to go get a job. She took us to her kitchen. She lived in a bachelorette, one room. She opened the kitchen cupboards—a small kitchenette in the bachelorette—and there not only was the plaster missing in a two-foot-wide hole, but the lathe behind it was missing. We saw the copper piping and the conduit for the electricity and the tracks of the hordes of cockroaches and the dead cockroaches that were on those little sticky cockroach traps on her kitchen counter, where the cockroaches invade on a daily and nightly basis.

2000

Mr Marchese: Eight years it's been there, since she moved in.

Mr Kormos: Eight years.

I'm telling you again, not a big job. It means putting in some wire lathe and doing two layers of plaster. But what is dramatic here is that she too was responded to with a rent increase notice this year, under this government, in excess of 33%. There will be some relief for her because she's going to have to move. She can't afford a 33% rent increase. At this point in her life, having spent too many mornings cleaning up mouse droppings and chasing the mice through the kitchen and cleaning up the cockroaches that are stuck to those cockroach traps, the sticky ones, she's now almost inclined to think that maybe even homelessness might contain with it some relief from that kind of pestilence.

You see, I asked not only the people whose apartments we were in but other tenants and people in the neighbourhood. Rosario and I walked up there from Queen Street. I said, "My God, this landlord surely isn't going to be able to rent these vacant apartments out with these new high rents in those conditions." The response was, "You bet your boots he will," because the demand for accommodations is so high that people will pay those new, incredibly high rents even for apartments in those deplorable, unsafe and unhealthy conditions.

There are 720 units, well in excess of 1,000 people, every one of them capable of being a homeless person within a matter of weeks, every one of them capable of being forced out on to the street with their hand out to beg, relying on the charity of strangers and whatever ingenuity they can devise along with that panhandling to encourage a loonie or toonie out of passersby. I don't begrudge a panhandler his or her loonie or toonie. I wouldn't dare suggest that somehow they deserve to be poor and I deserve to be affluent, nor would I dare suggest that somehow they must be less capable than I am or less motivated than I am, or any of us.

I raised West Lodge because I think it speaks to those West Lodge high-rises owned by a slumlord whose sole motive is profits. Again, I understand profits. Some day, like I said the other night, I'd like to make some doing something. I understand profits, but the bottom line has surely got to be more than just about bigger and bigger profits. We can't rely on the corporate world to somehow abandon or lose its drive to create profits. That's why it's the responsibility of community, through levels of government like municipal government and provincial government and federal government, to take some responsibility for ensuring that the families like the families we visited on West Lodge have decent, affordable housing, because the private sector doesn't provide it. It doesn't provide affordable housing for these folks, nor does it for a minute provide decent housing.

I go back to the gentleman outside the ATM. I was very moved by that gentleman. I was moved by the incredible amount of goodwill and good spirits that he had. Here's a guy who, if he has a home—and go to

some of the rooming houses where our poorest neighbours, if they have accommodations, are required to live. Go to some of those rooming houses: the filth, the stink of vomit and urine, the stale, putrid odour of septic plumbing that's leaking, the small, cramped, unvented rooms, the windows that are sealed shut because they've been painted shut, the rooms without fire escapes—and people die in those rooms. We've witnessed that in Toronto well within the course of very recent history, haven't we?

Here's a government that slashed welfare rates by almost 22%. It forced many of those people living in those hovels, in those rooms, in those tenements to supplement their incomes, slashed by 22%, to go out on the streets, to call upon the charity of neighbours to augment the funds they had. You see, when you live in one of those rooms, you don't have cable television and you don't have a telephone. They don't fit into your budget. You don't go out to eat unless you go to a soup kitchen, you don't go to the grocery store unless you go to the food bank, and if you do cook at home it's on a little electric hot plate that's forbidden in most apartments, and for good reason, but necessary for these people.

What's the matter with us as a community, as a society? This is the most prosperous, the most affluent, the wealthiest place in the world right here, the province of Ontario. I don't dispute it. We've seen the ratio of CEO and corporate director incomes. The relationship between corporate boss incomes to their workers' incomes, a relationship of 10 and 20 to 1, in some 10 or 15 years grows to 200 and 300 to 1. We see corporations like the banks making huge, unprecedented profits and responding to those profits by announcing more job losses.

My family background is Catholic. I was over at St Kevin's Church in Welland a couple of weeks ago, where they had the annual service accompanied by a gathering of Out of the Cold volunteers which is a mostly inter-denominational group. Father Wagner, who is a brilliant and lovely man, is the parish priest at St Kevin's. I was proud to be at the mass. I would have been there, being a Catholic—my family is nominally Catholic—but I was proud to be at the mass and proud of what Father Wagner had to say.

There was a gentleman there, Joe Gunn, who is a policy analyst for the Canadian Catholic Conference of Bishops. Joe gave the homily at this mass. Part of his homily, which I found very moving, was his speech to this Out of the Cold group. It was a potluck dinner, and I'm grateful to them because once again this year I didn't bring my share of the food and I relied upon their generosity.

Joe Gunn talked about confession and about how in the Catholic tradition one confesses one's own sins. But he pointed out that maybe it's necessary for us also to confess our collective sins as a society. He questioned the people there. He said: "How many of us confess the sin of a government that cut welfare rates by 21.8%? How many of us acknowledge and confess the sin of a government that attacks the poorest people in this, the most

affluent, the most prosperous, the wealthiest jurisdiction in the world? How many of us acknowledge that we are but a privileged elite in this society to be among the income level that we are?"

Like those people who were annoyed by squeegee kids or panhandlers, I'm annoyed too. I'm annoyed by this bill. I'm annoyed by a government that would put in its target the weakest and the poorest and the most vulnerable people in our community and in our society. I'm annoyed by a growing lack of community, a breakdown, an erosion of community that would permit us to stop caring about our sister or our brother.

It's an old tradition; it's what community is about. It's a tradition that's prevalent in every religious faith that I am aware of, but certainly it's a tradition, if you're not one of the faithful, in civilized society that we ensure that those of us who have been blessed with more share some of what we've been given. We've been given it. I know the old line: "You work for it, you earn it. There but for fortune...." Those of us who have been blessed with more have an obligation to ensure that those who haven't get to share in some of the affluence that we treat with little appreciation.

Mr Marchese: Nonchalance.

Mr Kormos: Nonchalance.

I'm not voting for this bill. I didn't support it on first reading. I opposed it on second reading like the other opposition members did. I understand there's agreement for consent to a directed divided vote tomorrow afternoon. We'll be voting against it tomorrow.

I'm not proud of a government that would tell the poorest of the poor that that government is going to deal with poverty by obscuring the symptoms of that poverty, by sweeping the streets clean of the panhandlers who are manifestations of that poverty.

I want to leave time for my colleague Rosario Marchese, who has a strong interest in this matter and who has been handing me notes now for a considerable period of time reminding me to leave him some time. I'm pleased to share time with Rosario Marchese.

The problem is, this debate can't go on beyond 9:30. Not all the members of this Legislature who want to and, quite frankly, who should be speaking to this bill are going to be allowed to, because time allocation has ruled them out. There are 103 members of this Legislature. In a democratic Parliament, any one or all of those 103 members should and would have a right to speak to legislation put before that Parliament. Their constituents deserve it and democracy deserves it. This government has no regard, however, for those constituents or for democracy. That's apparent in its process and in its substance.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure to be able to speak on Bill 8 on the third reading. I'm told I have eight minutes and 22 seconds, and that's exactly how long we'll take.

This bill is about safety, the relative impression of safety. That's not possible as we see some of the problems on our streets with aggressive panhandling, squee-

gee kids and sharp objects being distributed and left in the open, along with condoms.

When we talk about safety, it is indeed a relative thing. It's sort of that perception and it is indeed important that that perception be corrected. That's one of the things this bill will certainly do. There's a range, from being very safe to being terribly unsafe, and it's that perception we need to correct.

In this day and age, we have coming into our living rooms literally a hundred channels of information. We're bombarded by bad news. Whether it be tragedies on TV or radio, or whether it be in the newspapers, we're getting it on a regular basis—horror stories from literally every corner of this universe. Sometimes it gives us a feeling that we're absolutely prisoners in our own homes. That's certainly the case for my mother, who I'm sure is watching this evening. She often feels that way in her apartment. She's concerned when she sees various things on TV and wonders about what is really happening out there in that big nasty world.

The ones who are particularly vulnerable are women, particularly senior women who are concerned. Often these are the people who are targeted by our panhandlers because they believe they are indeed a soft touch and easily frightened away. This really reinforces the need for this particular bill. Just picture an elderly lady driving up to a stop sign, being approached by a squeegee kid with no shirt on, all kinds of tattoos, earrings, spiked hair, and then, as the member for Guelph-Wellington was commenting, taking a hold of the aerial and shaking it on her car while she's stopped. Just imagine a lady who's 70, 80 years old driving up and being approached in this way.

It's time we gave back to people the right to go out at night and feel comfortable. That happens right in one of my communities, Cobourg, where they stage "Take back the night." It's a candlelight march that occurs every year. "Take back the night" is how it's referred to and I think it's very appropriate that that should happen, particularly as we look at the recent anniversary of the Montreal massacre. It certainly brings home the concern that women have. Women should have the comfort of going out at night and feeling safe on the streets and not have the kind of threat that seems to be out there at this point in time. Men take that for granted at any time.

You know, I really wonder why the opposition isn't jumping up and down and screaming about this gender imbalance. You would think they would be. I've heard the member for Broadview-Greenwood stand up and say she feels very comfortable with the squeegee kids. I really don't understand, because that is not consistent with her other comments.

Whose rights are we protecting here? As I listen to the opposition's concern, they talk about the rights of the squeegee kids. I wonder, what are the rights of the average citizen? Shouldn't the average citizen have the right to go out on our streets and feel safe? Shouldn't they have the right to go out at night and feel safe? These are the citizens, I might add, who are paying the taxes.

They're the ones who are observing the laws. They're the ones who wish to go about their business unmolested.

2020

Interjections.

Mr Galt: I love the support I'm getting here.

Are the squeegee kids paying taxes? I don't think so, and that's not right and that's not fair. I think there needs to be something done about it.

Our reputation is at stake, particularly for cities like Toronto that are known outside of Canada as reasonably safe cities. If we don't keep cities like Toronto appearing safe, tourists are not going to come here. I've had experience in Indonesia and Bangladesh, also hearing about the kind of aggressive panhandlers they have in the Philippines and that certainly keeps tourists out of those countries. We must guard this perception of safety as much as we possibly can.

It's important when we talk about a city like Toronto being safe, certainly there are thousands of communities throughout Ontario that are indeed safe, and there are many ways that you can go about doing that kind of thing. First, you have to do good and then you can talk about it and give that image. That's an old adage that we have in public relations, certainly do the good first and then be seen doing it.

That's the kind of perception we're trying to accomplish here and we have done that in a Safe Haven program that the Cobourg and District Chamber of Commerce has been helping to look after. This certainly increases the perception of safety on our streets, that the world is really not a dangerous place to be living in. It provides a network of main street businesses that offer passersby a safe haven in times of distress. This is battling the perception you get from mass media. It's an opportunity for our small business owners to give something back to the community, to provide a value-added service and to build a strong relationship with the local police.

This indeed is a very simple program with participating businesses providing signs, such as I have here this evening. If you don't mind, I'll hold it just for a second there. It's a sign with two hands, one reaching out to the other. We supply a brochure and also a list of emergency telephone numbers. This helps someone who may be feeling that they're in danger, lost or exhausted or feeling ill, that they can enter a safe haven, an establishment, for assistance. The shop owner in this particular program would then provide a seat and a place for people to make phone calls, to call the appropriate authorities or possibly the person's family.

This has been funded through Partners Against Crime, a grant from the Solicitor General, and we're also looking at expansion. The police are very interested in it in Port Hope and in Quinte West. We're also using it in Presqu'île, and it's interesting to note that my colleague Cam Jackson is also using a pilot program in Burlington.

These programs, and this particular one that we've initiated in Cobourg from my office, are an example of taking back control on our streets and having a truly safe

community. Government has an obligation to support programs such as this and provide the legislative tools communities need to enforce community standards.

This safe streets bill is another example of the Harris government's commitment to building safe communities. It is indeed a piece of legislation that I heartily endorse.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It's interesting to listen to those comments about you reaching out to help, but what you're doing is you're lashing out to hurt. The policies of this government are a joke. Your priorities are a joke. There are so many things that we need to be dealing with in this province, but no, we've got to deal with squeegee kids and panhandlers. You shouldn't be focusing in on squeegee kids and panhandlers; you should be dealing with things like persons with disabilities, children and the homelessness that exists in this province. It's disgraceful the approach you're taking to try and take back the streets.

I truly wish that you would deal with the real issues, the issues that affect the lives of people in this province. Here we go again, ramming through legislation. That seems to be one of your goals and priorities as a government, not to call back the House as quickly as we could have after the election. We come back in late October and you try and ram through legislation. You put forth the omnibus bills and you take away the democratic right of the opposition to have good input.

You talk about the consultation that took place. Nine people have had an opportunity to comment on this legislation, but again in your short-sightedness—there's more to this province than Toronto. Why didn't you take the consultations out across the province and get input from across the province? But you didn't do that. You held the consultations in Toronto only and didn't give anybody else an opportunity to come in and speak to this. This issue that you're trying to fight here, the squeegee kids and the panhandlers, is not something that's unique to Toronto. These situations take place all across this province, but you don't reach out to try and get input.

Your cutbacks to programs and to welfare have hurt many, many people in this province. You've hurt the young, you've hurt the old, you've hurt the disabled, but you don't care, because you have one priority in your mind and that's tax cuts to help the wealthy few of this province.

Talking about those tax cuts, the member from Kitchener Centre asked me what I'd do with my tax cuts. I'll tell you what I do with my tax cuts. As I roam around this city of Toronto and explore this city, I drop my toonie in. There's part of my tax cut. When I leave this city to try and drive home and go back to St Thomas, I welcome the person coming to clean my window, because the roads are a disgrace in this province. There's so much dirt and grime, everything's kicked up off the road. I gladly put my toonie out to that person and have my window cleaned.

You say, though, that with this legislation you're out to try and support those people who are affected by pan-

handlers and squeegee people. I can tell you, any of the panhandlers I've talked to in this city or the squeegee people I've talked to in this city have never intimidated me. If I don't want my window cleaned because it has been cleaned the block previously, I just go like this and I wave at them and they leave me alone. They're not out to intimidate. Trying to bring in certain people in this province, older people, that they're intimidating them—these individuals are not out to intimidate. They're out because of the cuts and the damage that you've done. That's why they're out on the streets.

This is your answer to poverty in this province: Ban it. Ban poverty. Out of sight and out of mind, that's what you hope, but you're not succeeding in your goals, because the poverty isn't going to go away. This piece of legislation that's in front of us tonight isn't going to take away the problems that you all on that side of the House have created in this province.

Go talk to somebody who's out panhandling or squeegeeing, find out who they are. They're people who have been affected by your cuts. They're people who are on disabilities, who do not make enough money from what they're receiving from you. They have to do something to supplement their incomes. Go talk to them.

2030

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't think disabled people in this province are squeegee kids. I heard it. It's in the record. That's shameful, Steve. You should know better.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Mr Peters: I'm not trying to impugn a person with disabilities and I will retract that if, in the member's mind—but you're hurting people with disabilities, you're hurting people who are on welfare. You're not helping them; you're hurting them. I think it's terrible what you're doing.

Mr O'Toole: We should listen.

Mr Peters: Yes, I think you should listen more. I think you should look at some of the things you're doing.

In the city of London every year the Shinerama organization raises money from the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College for cystic fibrosis. Those students, those men and women, go out into the streets and solicit money. You're going to do away with that. School children who have been forced to sell chocolate bars because of the cuts they've been faced with, who walk up and down the streets—

Interjections.

Mr Peters: It's against the law. That's what this law says. It's against the law. The buskers, musicians—

Mr O'Toole: Who's writing your speeches?

Mr Peters: Who's writing my speeches? I'm writing my speeches, with my little notes.

The buskers, individuals who go out and try and make a living, are going to be against the law in this province.

I want to quote a couple of individuals, and I will read from somebody else's script here. This is a quote from today's London Free Press, an article by Julie Carl:

"A revolving door on a jail is a pricey solution to a complex problem of street people, both in financial costs and its enormous human costs.

"The government," that's you men and ladies on the opposite side, "must do better than this."

"It likely would if it put its efforts into solving the problems," instead of using the problems to show us how tough it really is.

Andrew Bolter, a gentleman who operates an organization called Life*Spin in the city of London:

"Using the criminal justice system and the police to deal with what amounts to a social, economic and, ultimately, a political problem is absurd. We can hire more police. We can fill our jails. But until we realize the existence of homelessness and abject poverty in a country with such wealth and resources is a collective failure for which we are all responsible, nothing will really change. We should be banning short-sighted governments and not those ... policies," that those governments create.

Mr Martiniuk: They didn't elect you.

Mr Peters: Yes, I got elected and I'm proud to be here to make sure we keep the government on its toes. As much as you try to stifle the opposition, we're not going to go away. We're going to continue to fight for the people of this province and a lot of people you really don't care about. You don't. You can just see your attitudes over there right now, the heckling that takes place. You think it's all a joke, but it's people's lives you're dealing with. You're not concerned about people's lives.

Mr Clark: In your opinion.

Mr Peters: I appreciate my opinion. I appreciate the opinion that I represent people in this province who actually care about people. It's obviously something that you don't care about, listening to the comments coming from the other side of the House.

Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity and I certainly will be voting against this legislation. I ask that you take a look inside, or come out of this building and go out and walk the streets of Toronto, walk the streets of London, walk the streets of communities across this province and see the damage that your policies have inflicted on so many people in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Marchese: I want to say that I admire the sincerity of the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Elgin-Middlesex-London. He didn't have a prepared speech. It wasn't the usual text that you see from the Tories. Have you noticed, Speaker, because you're one of theirs? They always have a script. It's always prepared. They dare not go out of the text. Have you observed that, Speaker, from that neutral chair of yours? I have.

The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London spoke from the heart. That's what we need in this place, not people who speak from prepared texts, whose lines have been written by either ministry people and/or their staff, but making sure that they're in line with the government,

particularly the Premier and the bureaucracy within that office. I don't respect that. I respect more what the member previous to me said. And of course I respect very much the stories that my good friend from Niagara Centre told, because those are real stories, in spite of some of the laughter from some of the members that I observed on this side as my friend from Niagara Centre was telling those stories. They thought it was amusing.

Mr Kormos: Who can laugh at desperation?

Mr Marchese: Apparently some of them can laugh at the human misery of others, but perhaps they didn't believe you. I'm not quite certain. But you and I were there. We told the same story because we saw the same story of human misery, of your so-called Tenant Protection Act which does the contrary. It victimizes the very people you pretend you're protecting in the act. That's what we saw. But I don't want to linger too long on that because I only have eight minutes of time. Given that you have limited our time to speak, we can only say what we can.

In that time I want to say that I find Bill 8 repugnant. The reason why I say that Bill 8 is repugnant is because all of this is politically motivated. You're not speaking to Torontonians, because they know this is not an issue for us. I live in the riding that you people talk about. When the member for Northumberland talks about community safety and that the seniors are all clamouring for safety and they're so frightened—and the Attorney General was quoted as talking about extortion; he referred to this activity as extortion—and other people talk about women in the streets screaming with fear about these poor squeegee kids in the street, working for a living, we're talking 200 kids. The member for Northumberland says, "We are very concerned about community safety and we want to keep our streets safe for the seniors," from presumably these Tories who come from the 905 and beyond. I live in the riding wherein you find the squeegee kids and the panhandlers. My riding is called Trinity-Spadina. My boundaries are: west, Dovercourt; east, University Avenue, to the lake. All this activity you people speak of happens in my riding.

If this fear, so much imagined by you but seeming to be real to you, were in fact a reality, I would be able to confirm it or deny it. I'm telling you that the fear you people project onto your supporters, the 905 and beyond, isn't a real one. It's an imagined fear. It's a politicized fear. The kids at the Lakeshore, whom I see frequently, are not a fear to anyone that I have ever observed.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Please come, drive through my riding, because these are the people you say are frightening some of you. The squeegee kids on the blocks of Queen Street, Queen and Bathurst, where they clean the windows—I'm not sure you people go through that area. I don't know. I don't know by whom you people get your windows cleaned and/or where, but it isn't in my riding. But this is the bill that purports to deal with these so-called subhumans who scare the hell out of you.

It's a politicized fear. When I hear some of your members—and I will not name him. He was on the same program with me, but I don't want to name him, because it's embarrassing. He talked about social decay. Speaker, I know you're as concerned as I am about this. I can tell. Social decay: 200 squeegee kids cleaning windows is social deprivation and we are reaching the depths of amorality or social decay. It makes me laugh, because it's so tragically stupid and funny that I don't know how to deal with this.

That you would waste my time in this Legislature to deal with this issue when we have real issues of crime is the real crime perpetrated on me and the people of Ontario watching this program. You talk about safety. When we deal with issues of violence against women, that's a crime. When I tell you that you people have control of it—unlike the gun control legislation; that is a different issue and it's at the federal level—you people have control to put money into the school system to prevent crime and to prevent violence against women, perpetrated usually by men, usually by close partners, against women. Put the money, Mr O'Toole, into that kind of prevention of violence. That, in my view, is serious crime, not a poor squeegee kid cleaning your window as a serious threat to your safety and/or that it could be considered extortion by your Attorney General. Please, in the context of real problems, you people waste my time and that of the people watching to deal with this?

2040

Chair of Management Board, you have to understand how repugnant I feel the introduction of such a bill to be. I know there are other ways we could be spending our time. We should be talking, by the way, about your millennium book. Member for Niagara Centre, have you seen that book? The Minister of Municipal Affairs was saying—I was there—"We spend seven days a week, 24 hours a day dreaming about how we can cut waste." I said to myself, what do the taxpayers think of this \$2.5 million to be spent on this millennium book?

Mr Clark: So let's not encourage kids, eh?

Mr Marchese: Certainly, to celebrate the richness and the wealth the kids have to offer through some pictorials they have drawn. But if you people are cutting left and right, if you people don't have the money to spend to deal with issues of violence against women but you have \$2.5 million to spend on a book that does nothing for anyone, I tell you, the taxpayers ought to be outraged, and they are. I tell you, they are outraged in London. On a radio program we did, I could feel the anger; it was palpable. One woman said it is a disgrace for you fine Tories to be wasting her money on such things. This is a taxpayer from London.

I have no enjoyment in being able to speak about a bill that I believe should not be before us, because I think you people should be dealing with real crime. When you talk about seniors, talk about the fact that perhaps you need a few more cops on the road, on the block, in the community, for community safety, to protect them. You will recall, as our leader pointed out, that in 1994 we had over

1,000 more police on the beat than you do presently. So you talk the big line about safety in your communities. Mr Newman shakes his head incredulously because he doesn't know or doesn't want to or doesn't understand. You have 1,000 fewer cops now on the street than we did when we were in power, and you are the tough ones, the tough law-and-order types.

This is an egregious waste of my time, to deal with 200 squeegee kids trying to earn a living, as my friend from Niagara Centre said. These people are too fat with money to worry about these young people—

Mr Kormos: They're too corrupted by power.

Mr Marchese: —and corrupted by power, indeed, to worry about 200 young people trying to earn a living cleaning my windows and cleaning their car windows.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me the time.

I'm going to read some quotes here. "A lot of people are fed up with some of these punks." I'm not saying that; this is coming from the member opposite, Mike Colle, in the Toronto Star, June 21, 1996.

Mr O'Toole: Repeat that. I didn't get it.

Mr Gill: He said, "A lot of people are fed up with some of these punks."

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I can appreciate that the member is fairly new in the House, but I would like to see every member addressed by the riding they represent. The member who has been mentioned represents the riding of Eglinton-Lawrence. I would appreciate that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member will refer to the members by their riding name.

Mr Gill: This is a quote from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He also said, "I'm surprised and disappointed that Mr McGuinty seems indifferent to the experience of his own caucus colleagues." That's for the record.

The member for Trinity-Spadina—I travel through that riding pretty well every evening. I get my gas at one of the local gas stations and a lot of times when I go to clean my windows—I love to do my own work—there are no squeegees, no tools to do that. I ask the gas station attendant, "How come there are no service tools provided?" "Because we keep losing them every night, so we don't provide that any more."

The thing is, for the last 12 years we've had the pleasure of a Liberal government and an NDP government—

Interjection: That was no pleasure.

Mr Gill: Of course that was no pleasure, like the member here says. Then we had our government.

I'm a new member, as the House knows, and as I went door to door calling on people to vote for me, and as my opponents went door to door, all of us had these beautiful programs with us. I had a copy of my Blueprint, which I always keep handy right here, my Liberal counterpart had the 20/20, and I'm not sure what the NDP had, but they

had something. All of them had some glowing descriptions of the programs they were going to carry out.

I was so pleased with the work that some of these members on this side of the House had done in the last five years, pleased that when I went door to door with our Blueprint, they said: "This is great. There is so much credibility in this document. There is so much credibility in the government, that they are there to listen. They are there to do the programs that the public needs."

We make laws that the people of Ontario have asked us to make. When I went door to door I asked many people if they come to Toronto often. Some of the ladies said they would like to, but they don't come here any more because it has become too dangerous. Thirty-one years ago, when I was 17 years old, when I came to Canada, I used to live near Dufferin and King, near the CNE. My sister was 14. At that time you could walk the streets, you could go anywhere you liked at 3 am, 4 am, without any problem. Coming back to the House the other day, I'm driving near Bay and King and this squeegee person comes over and is going to clean the window. A block before, somebody else had done it, so I tell him, by signing, like one of the other members opposite said, "No, I don't need it." He went ahead anyway, which is fine.

I drive an old Voyageur van and on the dash I usually have some change so I looked at it, took some change out and handed it to this person. I have been taught by my parents to respect money no matter how small a denomination that money is in, and I'm trying to instill that in my children as well. This squeegee person looked at this money, let it all fall down on the pavement and said something to me like, "Maybe you need it more than I do." That hurt me because that is against the values I've been taught, and I was offended. He also said some other things which I cannot repeat in this House.

2050

At the same time, like the members opposite said, there are problems. I come from a riding, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, where business is booming because of the initiatives that our government has taken, and friends of mine in business cannot get enough workers. I can assure you there are plenty of jobs around. The unemployment rate is less than 6%, the lowest possible. The economy of Ontario is fuelling, is really progressing better than the G7 countries.

The other day I had a cable show, which I do every three or four weeks. Peel Regional Police Chief Catney was there and we spoke about some of the initiatives, some of the programs that the Peel police have implemented. One of them is a community policing initiative. What they have done in Peel is they've gone to storefronts, they've gone to the plazas where people, the general public, can walk into a police station and discuss some of these safety issues that we're discussing in this House. They can share their concerns about the difficulty that some of our mothers, our sisters, our friends, our spouses are facing. These days nobody has the confidence to walk the streets of Toronto late at night. We

want to ensure that we bring back that safety where people can feel confident they can enjoy this great city of ours. They should not be intimidated.

I'm going to make this speech a little more formal.

This bill we're discussing protects the public's ability to use the streets. "Take back the night," like the member from Northumberland said. It creates new provincial offences. The Safe Streets Act would ban squeegeeing. It would ban panhandling and other types of aggressive solicitation. It would also ban solicitation in situations where people cannot easily walk away, such as at automated teller machines. It would ban disposal of dangerous objects. In today's day and age when diseases are rampant, some of these diseases that cannot be controlled, we do not want to expose the public, we do not want to expose our families when they're enjoying the parks, when they're walking on the streets, to hypodermic syringes, condoms. Shame.

This bill also gives police the power to arrest and the courts the ability to impose sentences, including jail for repeat offenders.

We are responding to the requests that something has to be done about the behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of Ontario's streets. Communities ask that something be done, as no current provincial legislation specifically addresses squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling and other types of solicitation. The government has responded by introducing the Safe Streets Act. The bill would give police powers to arrest for these offences and give the courts sentencing options including jail time.

Some members might say that there are municipal bylaws to handle this kind of situation. While those municipal bylaws result in offenders receiving tickets, they do not allow for arrest or imprisonment. The province was asked to provide tougher means of dealing with this problem. The province has responded by introducing legislation that will give police and the courts tools to help ensure the safe use of the streets.

Municipalities, business people, drivers and police from communities across the province have voiced their concerns about the safe use of the streets. We were asked to take action and that is what we are doing. We listened and we introduced legislation to respond to the concerns of the people.

The member opposite from Trinity-Spadina was saying that talking about safety is wasting time. Even one person getting hurt, getting intimidated is one person too many. It's not a waste of anybody's time when you talk about safety on the streets.

Both of these governments, the Liberals and the NDP, have been soft on crime. Even now they're wishy-washy even though their own members have mentioned that they're concerned, that they're being intimidated, that they're being harassed.

We also talked to Chief Catney about the success they've had with the bicycle patrol, the involvement in the communities where people feel safe and that they can now go out and take back the streets. That is the initiative

we are bringing about to make sure these communities feel safe.

Mr Speaker, I should have mentioned earlier that I am going to be sharing my time if you so allow, part of my rotation, with the members from Thornhill and Durham.

In the Blueprint, as I said earlier, we committed to giving police the power to crack down on squeegeeing and aggressive panhandling. This is behaviour that jeopardizes the safe use of the streets. We reiterated our commitment in the speech from the throne and on November 2 we introduced the Safe Streets Act, 1999, which we are debating today, and no, it's not a waste of anybody's time to talk about safety on the streets.

Under the Safe Streets Act, the Highway Traffic Act would be amended to ban persons from going into the roads to offer commercial services to the drivers. As you would have heard, in the summertime one of the squeegee persons was hurt pretty badly. He could have lost his life. He went under a truck, which is a totally unsafe way of plying his trade. That is the kind of behaviour we're trying to make illegal.

This bill would make it illegal to panhandle in situations where people cannot easily move away, such as bank machines. At the same time, somebody said, "Are we going to illegalize the selling of chocolates or the selling of cookies door to door?" I guess the members have not read the act properly. Even in question period, and I'm a new member and I don't mind saying that I'm a new member, a lot of times the members opposite ask a question and never wait to hear the answer.

I remember, Mr Speaker, that you were trying to control their rowdiness today, so I'm surprised they've even read the bill. They keep debating and wasting the House's time but I don't think they've really comprehended it.

2100

We don't come up with these bills. We are being asked by the people of Ontario, the police association, the business people, the mayors, and we lead by example. There is, as you know, a lot of talk going on, discussions between the council and the government, as to size of the city council. We lead by example. When I met some of the legislators from around the world this year and I talked to them about the reduced size of this House, from 130 members to 103, they were very pleased. We said we believe in fewer politicians, we believe in less red tape and we believe in more efficient government. I think it's only fair that we ask the same from the government, from the people who govern the city of Toronto.

As I mentioned a few days earlier, the size of the number of councillors is almost the same as the size of the government—one less. Therefore, we are leading by example, and that is the kind of bill and the kind of law we want to bring out so people feel safe in this great city of ours.

We are trying to bring the Olympics to this great city. We want to make sure that people feel safe. It's a world-class city. Let's show that it is. So I'm hoping that everybody in this House, including the members opposite,

believes in the safety of the individual, believes in property safety. I'm asking everyone to please own up to it, be responsible to your constituents and pass this bill quickly so that people can benefit from it.

Mrs McLeod: I'm pleased to participate in the debate on a bill called the Safe Streets Act. I was very pleased to hear our critic, the member for St Paul's, when he spoke earlier this evening, say that the issue of squeegee kids, which is really what the safe streets bill is all about, was not an issue he heard raised very often during the campaign. In fact, I think he said there wasn't a single door that he knocked on in his riding of St Paul's where people said, "This is one of our big concerns." I was pleased to hear that because our critic, the member for St Paul's, represents a Toronto area riding and I thought that if squeegee kids was a big issue, one of our Toronto members was undoubtedly going to hear about it.

It was not an issue that I heard about while I was campaigning in my riding of Thunder Bay-Atikokan, but I thought maybe that was because I'm not from the city of Toronto. We don't have squeegee kids, so this wasn't the biggest issue on the minds of constituents of Thunder Bay-Atikokan. I was pleased to hear the member for St Paul's say this wasn't a big issue in St Paul's either. The fact is that this bill, with its emphasis on getting squeegee kids off the streets, is before the House as the highest-priority item of this government in the House to date. At least until the sledgehammer bill on municipal amalgamations was brought forward this week, this was the highest priority for this government: getting squeegee kids off the streets.

Why is it there? It's there because the government recognizes a hot-button issue when they see one. Was the hot-button issue dealing with squeegee kids? No, it wasn't. The hot-button issue for the government was, "We are going to make our streets and our communities safer so people can walk without fear." Who would disagree with that as a goal? Who would disagree that that's important to the constituents of virtually every riding, perhaps particularly in large urban centres like Toronto?

The government took this goal, took this hot-button issue, campaigned on it, made it a priority for their campaign, made it a priority in their throne speech, and what does all of their action on public safety, on making our streets safer, on ensuring people can walk in our communities without fear come down to? It comes down to a bill that basically takes squeegee kids off the streets.

This is a government that never asked itself, "What happens to them after you've taken them off the streets?" It's like the number of people who have been taken off the welfare rolls. The government likes to talk about all the people who aren't on the welfare rolls. It doesn't talk about how many are on the three-month hiatus where they've been cut off any kind of support at all. It doesn't talk about the number of people who are no longer on welfare because they're students in school, sole-support parents who now have to support themselves and their children by taking out loans which they will someday have to repay.

The government doesn't like to talk about, "Where have the people gone?" It's not going to talk about, "Where will the squeegee kids go?" It just wants to be able to say: "We've taken action to keep our streets safe. We've taken the squeegee kids off the streets." As far as this government is concerned, they can disappear into oblivion. They don't have to account for them any more because they can say they've done it.

This was not a big priority for people in Thunder Bay-Atikokan, where I did my campaigning last June. I know what was a priority for the people in my riding; I know what is still a priority for the people of my riding today. It's health care; it's hospital restructuring. What's the other piece of legislation that we're debating in the House this week? Bill 23, the bill in which this government extends the powers it gave itself some four years ago to go in and close, merge, amalgamate hospitals, and to do it not through a community consensus, but to do it by coming in and imposing the directions of government on a community.

You know—I think we all know—if you come from one of the 22 communities which had a visitation from the hospital restructuring commission, the kind of chaos that has been visited on those communities by the work of hospital restructuring. That's the kind of approach this government takes. So the other bill we're debating in the House this week is Bill 23, which extends the minister's and the government's powers to continue to take that kind of hammer to communities.

What are some of the other priorities in health care? We raised in the Legislature today the reality of what's happening in emergency rooms in hospitals here in Toronto and in communities in many, particularly urban, areas of the province. Yesterday in Toronto, there were 10 hospitals that were not taking any patients no matter how critically ill they were. Another 15 hospital would take only the most seriously ill patients.

Today the Minister of Finance assured us that nine hospitals were having their emergency rooms open—nine hospitals. That's progress for this government, progress of the kind that the Minister of Health referred to when we raised the issue last week about cancer care waiting lists.

We raised the concern about the fact that, according to the auditor, only 30% of cancer patients are receiving treatment within a recommended timeframe. The minister said, in order to assure the Ontario public that they had the matter well in hand: "Don't worry, we're making progress. Now 35% of people are receiving cancer treatment in a timely way. We have a goal to make sure that half the people who have cancer can get treatment in a timely way." Cancer care is a priority for people in my community.

The members opposite may want to ignore the concerns that real constituents in their ridings have—

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sorry, I just wondered when the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan would be addressing Bill 8 rather than Bill 23.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I was listening to her earlier and she was certainly on the topic of the bill that we're debating.

Mrs McLeod: Thank you very much. I take it you're recognizing that my challenge to the government is making the safe streets bill, which is really a bill about getting squeegee kids off the streets, the highest priority for this Legislature during this legislative session. I was pointing out something the members may prefer to ignore, the kinds of issues which are a priority for my constituents and, I believe, are priorities for the constituents of most of the members here. It isn't squeegee kids. It's not the issue that the government has made its priority for this legislative session.

Another priority for my constituents is the issue of physician shortages. This government promised to do something about that, just as they promised to do something to make our streets safer—just so the members opposite feel I've made some appropriate allusion to the bill in front of us. What have we seen? We haven't even got the report yet of the fact-finder who was sent out in the summertime to find out if there really was a shortage of physicians. That wasn't a high enough priority for the government to bring it back before this Legislature, even though it's now just two weeks until we recess for Christmas. What was a priority was to bring the Safe Streets Act to push the political hot button to be able to tell people: "We did what we said we would do. We got the squeegee kids off the street."

They brought this bill in early, so we've had fair bit of debate on it. We even had public hearings. We had a day's public hearings on the Safe Streets Act. I was at the committee when we had the hearings. Given the fact that we've got an omnibus sledgehammer bill on municipal amalgamation that was brought in I think just this week, and the government would like it passed by Christmas—shades of Bill 26, brought in two weeks before Christmas and they wanted it passed before the Christmas recess—I wonder whether or not we're going to have public hearings on that omnibus bill on municipal amalgamation. The government's priority? The Safe Streets Act, brought in in lots of time to have what this government would consider adequate public hearings.

2110

I remember the days when we used to go out on the road for a couple of weeks, having public hearings on pieces of legislation which were considered to be important by the government, but now it's really something if the government will have a day of public hearings, which they did on the safe streets bill.

Let me tell you what people said in this one day of public hearings on the safe streets bill, on this issue of getting squeegee kids off the streets. Let me give you some of the quotes. I jotted down some of the quotes that were made by various presenters. Obviously with the time left to us I can't go into chapter and verse of what 13 presenters said about this bill, 10 of whom were in opposition to the bill. I wonder whether the concerns they raised will be given any consideration at all by the mem-

bers of the government, because they certainly weren't given any consideration at all by the members of the committee that heard those same presentations.

I'm reaching the point where I wonder if there was any point in having public hearings. Is there still a point in giving people a voice even though the government is not going to look at the merits of its legislation and reflect upon the voices that were raised in opposition? When 10 of 13 presenters say that this is a bad bill, and the government merely brings it back into the House for third reading as they have done this evening, you do question whether this government is in any way serious about even having one day of public hearings. But we had them and we should, I guess, be grateful for that token opportunity for the poor in this province to have some voice.

Here is what we heard from people who presented. We heard them say "the Ontario government"—this Ontario government—"that is interested only in representing real people, whom they define as hardworking, tax-paying people." The Throne Speech made that abundantly clear. "This government has worked long and hard to create a fear of poor people." And that's exactly what they've done. If this government can't find a hot button that is going to work for them appropriately or fully enough, they press that button even harder. They stir the pot. That's what they've done with squeegee kids. If people aren't sufficiently alarmed about squeegee kids, if the member for St Paul's didn't hear about it on the campaign trail, we'll make sure people know how they should be afraid of squeegee kids. So they worked long and hard to create a fear of poor people.

We heard people say that this bill "would do nothing except to criminalize poverty." We heard people say that this bill was "not condemning the conduct but condemning the person." Because after all, how threatening is a squeegee kid, as our leader said, who comes armed with a squeegee and whose attack is against a windshield? Is that really the ultimate in urban violence that this government wants to address, somebody armed with a squeegee, attacking a windshield? No. Because this isn't about the conduct, this isn't about the threat that squeegee kids pose to individuals; this is about condemning a person, a person this government wants people to fear so that they will be able to take credit for having made our streets safe by sweeping squeegee kids off the streets.

We heard people say that this government ignores the causes of poverty, that they want to simply hide the reality of poverty. As we heard the National Anti-Poverty Organization say: "None of us believes that the presence of beggars in our community is a good thing. None of us wants to see 'aggressive panhandlers.'" But the solution of those who see these as being real people, who don't believe that real people are solely the hard-working, tax-paying persons this government wants to address, people who see squeegee kids and panhandlers and people who receive welfare as being real people, want to take a different approach to dealing with aggressive panhandling and squeegee kids.

Some of us would like to address the realities, such as the realities of children in poverty because the squeegee kids began life and continued their life in most cases as children in poverty. Yet this Premier wants to deny the reports that show how poverty in Ontario is increasing: "No, no, wrong statistics, wrong report. Use the Fraser Institute report. That tells you what poverty in Canada for children is really all about."

This is a government that doesn't want to deal with homelessness. They'd rather attack the homeless than deal with homelessness. Seventy-six per cent of the squeegee kids, who are the focus of this bill, are homeless. They have no place to go. They may be able to go to a shelter. Some of them get into a shelter. Others have no place at all to go and they will not have any place to go after the safe streets bill receives its third reading.

This is a government that doesn't want to do anything about addressing the real needs of children who need support in school if they're going to be able to learn and be successful. I hope people understand that 85% of the squeegee kids that this bill is attacking do not have a high school education. I suppose this government will say: "That's their fault. This is a province that is well-to-do. We have schools. They could have gone to school. They could have completed their high school education. It's their fault." If you don't pull yourselves up by the bootstraps then you're to blame.

Interjection.

Mrs McLeod: I would invite people, including this member for Durham, who I think might actually understand what special-needs kids actually require if they're going to learn—he might understand that some of the squeegee kids have come out of abusive homes. Do you think abused kids are going to be able to learn in school without some additional support? I'd be prepared to bet that if you could do an assessment on squeegee kids, you would find out that a fair number of them have learning disabilities that aren't being addressed in our schools.

What's this government's response to the lack of educational supports so that kids with difficulties can learn? This government's response is to cut special education funding. They'll say, "Oh no, it's not true." Come to my riding, where education is also a priority, and you'll find that the Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board is being funded for only 50% of the students, the young people, the children who need special education support. That's not by the board's definition. That's by the Ministry of Education's definition. Fifty per cent of the kids who have been approved for special education support get that support.

I'm going to run out of time to talk about all the issues that this government refuses to make a priority. I'm going to run out of time to talk about the fact that this bill doesn't do much for safety in our communities when, as we heard at the committee, there are actually fewer police on our streets to enforce the bill than there were before the Mike Harris Tories came into office.

There's not going to be time to address the fact that these kids are going to end up in jail because they don't

have money to pay fines. What good does that do for society? If the government wants to deal only with dollars, what good does it do for efficiency? The government won't address any of these issues. It just wants to push hot buttons, and it's done it again.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I want to begin by addressing some of the comments from the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan, who asked why we are doing this. On page 31 of our Blueprint it says: "Aggressive panhandling: Whether you live in the city or are just visiting, you have the right to walk down the street or go to public places without being harassed or intimidated by aggressive panhandlers." Why are we doing it? It was in our Blueprint. Promises made, promises kept. What a novel idea.

I want to also address what this bill is and what it isn't. I had the pleasure of attending the justice and social policy committee and hearing some of the presenters. It's interesting that some of the members have selective hearing and they only pick out certain parts of what the presenters said.

I want to quote from one presenter, Margaret Knowles from Yonge Bloor Bay Association, who said that the legislation is not about the homeless and the poor. "It's got to do with activity that is threatening and intimidating" to people. She said, "Give us some relief." The residents in Yorkville are seniors and they are afraid. I believe that is St Paul's riding. The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan mentioned that the member for St Paul's didn't hear any concerns about the squeegees in the riding, so obviously someone wasn't listening.

I also want to talk a little bit about the comments that are made about the squeegee kids and saying that they are kids.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Is this Margaret Knowles the manager of Holt Renfrew, the high-end company that sells products to rich people?

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.
2120

Mrs Molinari: Also, another presenter, Staff Sergeant Ken Kinsman, talked about some statistics they had done. Of 331 squeegee people, the 101 females were 15 to 41 years old and the 230 males were from 16 to 60 years old. He also said they come from all over Canada, from Quebec, the US and Europe. They're from all over. They come to Toronto, to Ontario, to panhandle aggressively.

Bill 8 is An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation—aggressive solicitation. This is a person who engages in one or more of the following activities: "threatening the person solicited with physical harm"; "obstructing the path of the person solicited during the solicitation"—it lists six. I think the members opposite should read the bill and get further familiar with it. Another one is "continuing to solicit a person in a persistent manner after the person has responded negatively to the solicitation."

This is about safe streets. I want to comment on some of the issues that the member for Trinity-Spadina raised.

He talked about speaking from the heart, and then he went on to say that this was a waste of time. Safety in our streets is not a waste of time, and that's from the heart. So if he's talking from the heart, it amazes me how he can call this a waste of time.

The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London talked about concern about people's lives. That's what this is: We're concerned about people's lives. We're concerned about the safety of people in the streets being aggressively accosted by panhandlers. This is not about the poor. It's not about the homeless. It's about safety in the streets.

I've had people come to my constituency office and talk to me about their concerns about being safe. They're happy about this bill, that finally there's a government that is doing something to protect the innocent. That's what this bill will do.

The government spends millions of dollars every year on job training for youth and adults, on housing and housing support, and on services for people who are mentally ill. It disturbs me when I hear the opposition exploiting special needs and the disabled to promote their own political agenda. This is not about the disabled. This is about safety in our streets. I hope that the members opposite will recognize that.

Mr O'Toole: I just want to commend the previous speaker for doing such a fine job of addressing the issues and really bringing them into our own lives and our own living rooms. We could address some of the more specific things the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan said, but I think Tina has addressed them very well.

I do want to drive it into a little higher level of discussion, if I may have the attention of the other side. Our Attorney General and Solicitor General were in Vancouver the past week and they were challenging Anne McLellan and the federal government to look at the Young Offenders Act, the fundamentals of why we're trying to address this aggressiveness and swarming and the general accepted behaviour in students and young people today. That's the particular issue that I'm talking about here.

There needs to be leadership at the federal level and with the Young Offenders Act and the get-out-of-jail-free parole system. It's clear that the people who set the laws—of course, the provincial courts really just carry out to a large extent the laws. Our minister tried to appeal to the Liberal approach to justice and failed. In fact, they were denied access to appear before the legislative committee in Ottawa. They were denied access when Ontario—

Interjection: Arrogance.

Mr O'Toole: It's Liberal arrogance. It's demonstrated right there for you. What it says to me as a taxpayer here is that for too long—I won't use the dreaded phrase "the lost decade," because it's been overused, but I will use this reference: It's nice to portray yourself as being kind-hearted and compassionate, but I think it purely is not caring about society and showing the leadership that there are consequences, results or actions or decisions for

your actions. So there are consequences for our actions in society.

We are doing a disservice to our young people, starting with the Young Offenders Act, that there aren't any consequences for your actions, whether it's deliberately intimidating an elderly person coming to Toronto in their car. If that ever infiltrated into my riding of Durham, and I think of the people in Tyrone and Inniskillin and Blackstock, to name but three—I always like that, because Sean Conway does that. It's a little bit of a footnote.

I think the bill is long overdue. Whether it has far-reaching implications for people is really a function of how well they're fitting into society. Clearly, it's not acceptable to be panhandling. That's not what we want for our children. We want them to recognize that learning and contributing to society should be rewarded. That isn't a future for anyone of any age.

The message that I'm trying to leave is, whatever type of spin the Liberals want to say, we want to reward structure and effort. We want our young people to realize that society—in the society that my generation grew up in, that wasn't even an issue. What's gone wrong? The lost decade—I think the young people in our streets have lost hope because they know that if they work they're going to be taxed to death by Paul Martin.

The CPP—I was reading an article today. The Canada Pension Plan now—this is the argument—is actually going to negatively affect young people working in the hospitality industry, the lowest-paid people. Their increases in CPP pensions, because of Paul Martin and the federal Liberal tax-grab-and-spend, are going to be paying about 63% more by the year 2002. These are the very lowest-income people. Yet if I look at our policy on tax, it is to cut taxes. In fact, the lowest-income group should have their taxes eliminated for families under 20, especially single families.

Start to make it clear to everyone that crime won't be tolerated. Now, it should demand kind of a humanistic approach here in the court systems and in whatever services are available to young people. Clearly, we all want to get them back on track, but first you've got to tell them: "You're doing something wrong. This doesn't work. That's not a proper way of life."

There may be other skills. Maybe the school system failed them. Maybe their family failed them. But we've got to rescue those people. We've been trying. We've been listening to Mel Lastman, to the chief of police. We've been listening to the complaints from small business people who have had their street corners littered, who are having their customers intimidated. We've heard it from all sectors and all age groups, whether it's young women coming to work or young men walking the streets. Where do you draw the line, Mr Speaker? I'm appealing to you to somehow help me.

The Liberals are soft on crime. They don't get it. Anne McLellan had to take over. Allan Rock had gone so far off the map, the radar screen, they had to put in Anne

McLellan. I read her bio, not a very extensive bio, but she seemed to have a pretty solid grasp. But I think it's gotten beyond her. The Liberal agenda is driving it now that there are no consequences for your actions in our criminal justice system. That's the message that's out today.

I've heard it said on the other side of the House that this is acceptable behaviour. That's their statement about our society and our streets. It's coming to your community soon, Steve from St. Thomas. If you think that's acceptable behaviour, stand up and tell the people of Ontario that you agree with it. That's what you've told them and that's what I'm putting on the record tonight. Because I listened and, clearly, you don't get the message.

Where do you draw the line? You draw the line by first cautioning them and then you've got to let them know that there are some other things that you could be doing that are more meaningful, and are more value-added in life.

The Attorney General says when he was in Vancouver they tried to get them to lower the age in the Young Offenders Act so that people would be held accountable for violent, repeat crimes—rape and those kind of activities. I believe the people of this country want those people held accountable. Now there isn't capital punishment, so when they're finally stopped, they will finally stop committing the crimes. I believe that this government and this plan is just part of a whole strategy of making people responsible for their actions in society, and their imposition into other people's lives by causing violence, whether it's break-ins or squeegee kids. Where do you draw the line? I believe it's a fundamental value system.

While saying this, I still believe there are people in need in society. We think the solution to this is to have a strong economy where there are jobs for them to go to, real jobs where they're contributing and they feel valued in society. I don't believe that it's complimenting any human being to say it's OK to be a squeegee kid. I think human beings are better than that. I'll hold out a challenge to them to have a healthy economy. They deserve an opportunity for a job, to participate in this economy.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I'm saving two seconds for anyone else.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martiniuk has moved third reading of Bill 8. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Mr Sergio: Mr Speaker, I believe there is unanimous consent for a deferral on the vote.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there consent? Agreed? It is agreed.

It being 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 2133.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

CONTENTS

Tuesday 7 December 1999

THIRD READINGS

Safe Streets Act, 1999, Bill 8,

Mr Flaherty

Mr Martiniuk	1197
Mr Bryant	1199
Mr Kormos	1202
Mr Galt	1206
Mr Peters	1208
Mr Marchese.....	1209
Mr Gill.....	1210
Mrs McLeod.....	1212
Mrs Molinari.....	1215
Mr O'Toole.....	1215
Vote deferred.....	1216

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 7 décembre 1999

TROISIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les
rues, projet de loi 8,**

M. Flaherty

Vote différé.....	1216
-------------------	------



Conservation
Département

No. 25

N° 25

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

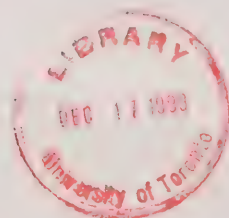
Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 8 December 1999

Mercredi 8 décembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 8 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 8 décembre 1999

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I rise today to pay tribute to a document that marked a watershed in international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was ratified on December 10, 1948.

The declaration is based on the inherent dignity of all people and affirms the equal rights of all men and women, in addition to their right to freedom. The declaration gives human rights precedence over the power of the state. While states are permitted to regulate rights, they are prohibited from violating them.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is significant in both its content and its application. It states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights," and serves as the driving force behind much human-rights-based legislation, like the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

In addition, the declaration has inspired the creation of subsequent international documents such as the International Bill of Human Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.

Furthermore, it makes the protection of human rights an important part of international law. It also serves as a basis for human rights observers like Amnesty International and many other international organizations.

For 51 years now, the declaration has provided international norms and standards to which the world community is expected to adhere. Despite a continuing struggle in many regions of the world, significant progress has been made and it is that progress I wish to celebrate today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale.

RAMADAN

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Mr Speaker, welcome back.

I would like to wish all members of the House a special Muslim blessing: Bismillah Ar-Rahman Ar-

Rahim—in the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful.

Tomorrow, December 9, marks the beginning of Ramadan for the members of the Muslim community in Ontario and across the world.

Ramadan is the holiest month of Islam and it commemorates the time when the Qu'ran was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.

Observed during the ninth lunar month, Ramadan traditionally begins with the actual sighting of the new moon.

For 30 days, our Muslim sisters and brothers will be living a life of restraint and piety, staying away from food and drinks between sunrise and sunset. Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam, and with the exception of children, the sick and the very old, all the devout Muslims are expected to participate.

As Ramadan ends Muslims come together in prayer to celebrate the thanksgiving festival of Eid-ul-Fitr. This festival of breaking fast lasts for three days and is marked by feasting and the exchange of gifts between friends and relatives. In fulfilling the teachings of their faith, Muslims all across the world are demonstrating a commitment to righteousness and compassion.

With us today in the members' gallery are distinguished guests from our Ontario Muslim community and members of the Islamic Society of North America. I would like for you to join with me in wishing our guest and all members of Ontario's proud Muslim community Ramadan Kareem and Eid Mubarak. This greeting, which in Arabic means, "May you have a month of giving and a blessed feast," speaks to the central meaning of Ramadan.

Assalam Alaikum. Thank you.

CLOSURE OF AGRICULTURE OFFICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On Tuesday, the Minister of Agriculture made a statement about the government's strong commitment to Ontario's farmers. However, we have learned that all field offices will be closed and replaced by only 13 resource centres.

In 1992, the Ministry of Agriculture had 50 offices. Now farmers will be served by only 13 resource centres, a 75% reduction of field offices. Yet the number of senior managers at the Guelph office will increase.

Ontario farmers get up at 5 in the morning and they fall into bed at 10 at night. What they need is access to concise, timely and accurate information. To expect

farmers to add to their long day by downloading e-mail or searching the Internet is unreasonable and unacceptable.

1340

Furthermore, farmers in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington are several hours from the nearest ministry resource centre, time they can little afford to be away from their business. For almost 10 years, the ag rep in my riding has been a key figure in our community. Some say she knows every farm family by name. Now the farmers in my riding and across Ontario will be served by a 1-800 number.

It is ironic that today the Minister of Agriculture is threatening to withdraw from the federal farm safety net if Ottawa does not increase funding. In a year that our farmers face record low crop prices, we need to increase support, not cut services and make ultimatums.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES IN DURHAM

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Although it does not look like Christmas outside, festivities in my riding of Durham are well underway. Ron Hope and the Newcastle BIA held their annual tree-lighting ceremony. Recently I also took part in the Bowmanville and Port Perry Santa Claus parades. I want to thank Andy Hendriks and Jim Grieve for their assistance.

I also congratulate members of the Bowmanville BIA, the Orono BIA and the organizers of the Farmers' Parade of Lights for finding fun ways of bringing in the Christmas season in the municipality of Clarington. On Wednesday, December 1, the first annual Farmers' Parade of Lights, coordinated by Bill Hasiuk took place. The parade route travelled through the historic villages of Enniskillen and Haydon and eventually ended up in the historic community of Tyrone.

On December 3, the rain didn't stop the large crowds from attending the annual tree-lighting ceremonies in Bowmanville and Orono. Following the tree lighting in downtown Bowmanville there were chances to ride on horse-drawn carriages, listen to holiday sounds from the Salvation Army band under the direction of Lieutenant Doug Stevens and trumpeter George Forsey, and to do some shopping. Jackie Borassa of the Bowmanville Zoo also brought some animals down to stimulate the children's interest. Garth Gilpin and Ron Hooper must be thanked for their volunteer contributions.

Dan Banting and the Orono BIA, as well as the Knights of Columbus 6361 Council, did an excellent job in lighting the lights of the festive season. Congratulations must go out to the Orono United Church junior choir and the Orono public school.

I would encourage all of the members to attend the riding of Durham during this season that we celebrate in this tradition.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I rise today to repeat a concern that has been brought to the attention of the

Minister of Health on several occasions. Despite the fact that 33,000 people in the riding of Brant said no to the closure of St Joseph's Hospital, and despite the fact that Brantford city council passed a unanimous resolution in support of keeping St Joe's open, and despite the fact that it was not Mike Harris's intent to close hospitals, your government has scheduled St Joe's to close. The Minister of Health has not responded to a new and creative proposal which saves money, establishes links with other health care facilities in other communities and, most of all, helps solve our area's identified doctors shortage problem.

What does this minister do? She ignores the new proposal. She agrees with the proposal that sends sick and dying patients into a construction zone, into temporary placements only to be moved a second time. Once this construction is completed, whole departments will be temporarily moved to fast-track this mess at a cost of \$800,000 for one department alone.

She has in her possession a letter from 18 doctor department heads pleading with her not to do this silly transfer. It's not good health care.

Now we learn that because of this government-approved ridiculous transfer policy, we may lose doctors because they have integrity and genuine compassion and concern for their patients. They would rather leave an area that is endangering patients than be party to this idiotic plan.

Do something, Minister.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The government's omnibus restructuring bill must be opposed. In general terms, the bill extends those arbitrary powers given to commissions in Bill 26 to impose restructuring orders. It permits non-elected, unaccountable organizations to do an end run around elected councils to try and force amalgamations. It gives the provincial government regulatory powers to impose conditions on referendums at the municipal level. It exempts municipal utilities from provisions of the freedom of information act so public scrutiny cannot occur. It gives the Harris government sweeping powers to pass regulations to change any act that may affect restructuring—behind closed doors and without public input. This will be used to fix the many mistakes that will be made as the government rams Bill 25 through.

The bill forces amalgamation of communities that have, in some cases, already voted to oppose such change. But the minister has hinted that he may allow two communities in two Conservative ridings to let residents hold referendums on amalgamation.

The bill gives enormous powers to non-elected transition teams for a longer period of time than was even permitted in Toronto's amalgamation. The teams can override municipal privacy and freedom of information laws.

The bill is silent on the critical question of who pays when communities are forced to amalgamate. The Minister of Municipal Affairs told local Sudbury media that the cost issue would be dealt with at a later date, but he didn't know when. He was quick, however, to reject a call for public hearings on the bill and confirmed he would push it through before Christmas.

For these, and many other reasons which I don't have time to list, we oppose Bill 25.

JOHNNY LOMBARDI

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I take great pleasure in rising today to give praise and recognition to an Ontarian who over the course of his life has acted as a defender, innovator, visionary and promoter. I congratulate and salute John Barba-Linardo Lombardi, commonly known as Johnny Lombardi of CHIN, on his 84th birthday.

Johnny Lombardi was born in 1915 in Toronto. The study of music in his youth led him to play trumpet in numerous dance halls. World War II ended his career as he became a soldier to defend his homeland overseas in Europe. He was decorated for this service with several medals.

Upon his return, he entered first into the grocery business and then moved into radio and television programming. With the ethnic format as the cornerstone, on June 6, 1966, CHIN radio came across the airwaves.

Johnny and CHIN have become synonymous with each other, reaching out to over 30 language and ethnic groups, crossing barriers that previously existed. Over the years, CHIN Radio has grown as it serves succeeding generations, broadcasting across North America. Johnny is recognized as being pioneering and a leading edge, and has been awarded the Order of Canada and the Order of Ontario. Johnny has also been mentioned in the Guinness Book of World Records as the host of the world's largest free picnic.

I wish Johnny Lombardi many more health, and happy years. Happy 84th birthday, Johnny.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I was absolutely astounded today to read in the national press that the Premier thinks redirection from hospital emergency rooms is not something to be concerned about.

Let me tell members of the government what happens in communities where you don't even have the option of redirect. In my community of Windsor, where the NDP closed two hospitals a few years ago, we're down to two emergency rooms. We don't have redirects, we have code 7s. Code 7 is when an ambulance stays in the parking lot with the patient. Last winter, at the height of the flu season, we were running at 50 to 60 code 7s a month. Today, we're at 15 to 16; that is, 15 to 16 ambulances at any one time can be taken out of service.

Let me tell you what's worse. We had four patients in my community sent to Detroit for health care who couldn't access our emergency rooms. They were sent out of the country on a redirect because this government has cut health care funding. It's forcing our hospitals into multimillion-dollar deficits, and no relief. They say to the hospitals: "That's your problem. Look after it yourself and keep running up your deficit."

But what they say to the people of my community and what they say to the people across this province is, "It's your problem if you get redirected, if you get redirected out of the country." What a shame. You ought to fix it now.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Oshawa.

LOCAL HERO IN OSHAWA

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Thank you, Speaker, and welcome back.

I rise today to speak of yesterday's heroic actions of four of my constituents.

Yesterday morning at the King East branch of the Bank of Montreal, a male approached the bank and fired a number of shots in a robbery attempt. Mr Lalande, now affectionately known as "The Chairman," took a moment out from selling tickets for the Knights of Columbus charity to halt the bank heist by clobbering the gun-firing bandit with a metal chair from his ticket booth.

This was an act of tremendous bravery and I would like to commend Mr Lalande for his actions. It takes a person with great courageousness to put his life in danger for the sake of our citizens and our community.

I do have to say, though, that if the federal government had followed our recommendations for severer penalties for the use or implied use of firearms in criminal activities such as these, I believe that it would have worked as enough of a deterrent to make sure they no longer use firearms in these activities.

I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Shawn Larocque, Kevin Spurrell and Lorenzo Guarini, who helped tackle this armed bandit to the ground once Mr Lalande disarmed the robber.

Oshawa is proud to have citizens like Louis "Chairman" Lalande, Shawn Larocque, Lorenzo Guarini and Kevin Spurrell in our community. I would ask all to congratulate the brave actions of the local heroes.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would like to inform the members that we have two groups of special guests.

We have in the Speaker's gallery today members of a parliamentary delegation from Ireland.

Also in the Speaker's gallery is the Right Honourable Lord Desai, member of the British House of Lords.

Join with me in welcoming our guests.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario.

Your committee begs to report the following bill, with amendment:

Bill Pr14, An Act respecting Blue Mountain Village Association.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg leave to inform the House today that the Clerk received the first report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to have been adopted by the House.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFE STREETS ACT, 1999 LOI DE 1999 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 8, An Act to promote safety in Ontario by prohibiting aggressive solicitation, solicitation of persons in certain places and disposal of dangerous things in certain places, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act to regulate certain activities on roadways / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la sécurité en Ontario en interdisant la sollicitation agressive, la sollicitation de personnes dans certains lieux et le rejet de choses dangereuses dans certains lieux, et modifiant le Code de la route afin de réglementer certaines activités sur la chaussée.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1352 to 1357.

The Speaker: Order. Mr Martiniuk has moved third reading of Bill 8. All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Beaubien, Marcel

Hodgson, Chris
Hudak, Tim
Jackson, Cameron

Runciman, Robert W.
Sampson, Rob
Skarica, Toni

Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Brad
Clement, Tony
Coburn, Brian
Cunningham, Dianne
DeFaria, Carl
Dunlop, Garfield
Ecker, Janet
Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hastings, John

Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kells, Morley
Klees, Frank
Mariand, Margaret
Martiniuk, Gerry
Mazzilli, Frank
Molinari, Tina R.
Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al

Spina, Joseph
Sterling, Norman W.
Stewart, R. Gary
Stockwell, Chris
Tilson, David
Tsubouchi, David H.
Tumbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

The Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Boyer, Claudette
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwint, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David

Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony
McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 36.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: A press release today indicated that the Premier has appointments at Queen's Park this afternoon. The opposition would have thought he'd want to keep his appointment and be here to answer questions.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Let me start off by saying that we're going to have order today in this House. I want to say very clearly that I will not put up with people shouting across when other members are asking questions. Each side has one minute to ask the question and one minute to answer the question, and if there's any shouting I will proceed to name people in this House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Speaker, in the absence of the Premier my question is for the Minister of Health.

Minister, to coin a phrase, the debate is over and there is no doubt whatsoever that you have left our emergency

rooms in a complete mess. The numbers are in, and your government has bungled emergency care and is today threatening lives. The number of hours Toronto's emergency wards closed their doors completely to ambulances was 14 times higher in October of this year than it was in the same month of 1995, and there is no coincidence that your government was first elected in 1995.

Will you now, for the first time ever, take responsibility for this mess and apologize to Ontario patients whose lives you are today putting at risk?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm very surprised at the statement and the question that has just been asked by the leader opposite. I would have thought he would have recalled the fact that individuals have been saying that the whole issue of emergency room pressures has been around for at least 15 years—in fact, David MacKinnon as recently as yesterday indicated—and it was only our government that recognized that this was a serious issue, that put a task force in place and is now moving forward to relieve those pressures.

If you had taken action years ago when you were in power, the situation would have been dealt with.

Mr McGuinty: You've been in charge for five full years, Minister. This is a crisis of your making. It has your fingerprints all over it. You made the cuts, you closed hospitals, you shut down beds, you shut down emergency wards, and the little bit of money that you have trickled in recently is going to pay down hospital deficits. This is a crisis of your making. What's worse is that your Premier is now saying it's OK that emergency wards are so swamped they're closing the doors to patients. Your Premier says that to say redirect is a bad thing is wrong.

Minister, do you agree with your Premier when he says that it is OK, that it is acceptable, that we now are in a predicament where we have 14 times the number of emergency wards that are shut down because of your mismanagement of health care in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member knows full well that our government has indicated that we are very concerned about health. In fact, it's a priority. It was our government, the very first government, that recognized the emergency room pressures, that set up the task force, that immediately after the task force made recommendations indicated that we would accept every one of the task force recommendations. We have put forward \$225 million to support those task force recommendations. Further to that, we've put forward another \$97 million to facilitate the construction of emergency rooms, and presently in Ontario, I am proud to say, there are 57 emergency rooms that are being expanded.

Mr McGuinty: When you so-called attacked this problem back in 1997 and 1998, you drove the numbers up from 400 hours to 1,000 hours in Toronto where hospitals were on critical-care bypass in October. When you act, people get hurt, Minister.

It is perfectly clear that this crisis is the result of your doing, of your mismanagement. You shut down the

hospitals, you shut down the emergency wards, you eliminated beds, you fired nurses, you made cuts, and hospitals now are so strangled for funds that when they get some from you, they use it to reduce their deficits.

Minister, will you finally, for the very first time, stand up and admit that this crisis is of your making and apologize to the people of this province for the risks you're putting them through?

Hon Mrs Witmer: That's absolutely unbelievable. If his government, when they were in power, had undertaken some action we wouldn't be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Will the minister take her seat. Order. The member for Essex come to order, please. I will not tolerate shouting across at other members.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I will not tolerate shouting across at other members when they're trying to answer questions. Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition doesn't remember the headlines when the Liberals were in power: January 5, 1988, Toronto Star: "No Room in Metro, Critically Ill Newborn Flown to Buffalo"; or January 4, Toronto Star: "Triplets Mum Flown to Kingston Because Toronto Can't Cope"; or how about the Ottawa Citizen, December 26, 1987: "Diverted From Two Hospitals, Woman Dies."

We are concerned about this issue and that's why we put the task force in place. That's why we've recognized that this is an issue that needs to be addressed. Thanks to our efforts, we are now expanding the capacity within the province. We are hiring additional nurses. There are additional physicians. We are constructing 20,000 new long-term-care beds to alleviate the pressure.

If you had undertaken the measures we have undertaken—

The Speaker: Order. Will the minister take her seat. The time is up.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Premier, my question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Today we have still more proof that, like most revolutions, yours is followed by a dictatorship. It's about your sledgehammer bill on municipal restructuring. Yesterday we exposed the hammer clause, a clause that is going to allow your cabinet to bypass this Legislature and to change or even eliminate laws under cover of darkness. That's the hammer.

Today we discover the sickle. You put a clause in here that lets you and you alone decide what a municipality can ask its own people in a referendum. You get to decide what it is that people might offer their opinions on and what it is that they may not offer their opinions on.

My question is simple, who died and made you king?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The

honourable member excels at misreading legislation and creating obfuscation which is designed to take us away from the fact that he has completely flip-flopped over this issue. He voted against a bill that was giving him exactly what he demanded from this government for a number of years. We will not be silenced on this.

Let me just add one quote to the record. Somebody said, "If Mike Harris doesn't restructure Ottawa, the best opportunity we've had in years to transform our community into an efficient, effective and competitive force in the new century will have been lost." Guess who said that? The honourable Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty. This man is a flip-flop artist—to call him a flip-flop artist would be an insult to the sandal industry.

1410

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I assume you're not familiar with this provision that's found in your bill, so I will enlighten you further. This bill gives you the power to veto any referendum question that a city or town wants to put on the ballot. It gives you that supreme authority. It grants you that divine right. It says that you get to decide what an Ontario community may or may not offer an opinion on. If a municipal council wants to get some understanding as to how people feel about how often they want the garbage removed, you get to decide whether the community might vote on that.

But more important, if a city wants a referendum on your downloading, you get to veto that if you don't like it. If a city wants to make a decision about the municipal restructuring plan being imposed on it, you get to decide whether or not the citizens of that community have a right to vote on that. Minister, if that isn't censorship, if that isn't dictatorship, then tell me what is.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me cite two examples of what perhaps the people of Ontario would like to see and define as dictatorship. Perhaps the honourable member can tell us why, on the Loan and Trust Corporations Act of 1987, the Liberal government put in a clause that he is now condemning this government for putting in. Perhaps he can explain to the people why he flip-flopped on that. That would be the first question.

The second question is, why are you accusing us of that sort of behaviour when you yourself want to force bilingualism on to cities when it is the perfect right of the cities to make that decision? Perhaps he should find out why he is flip-flopping and why he is forcing municipalities to make those kinds of decisions.

Mr McGuinty: If the people of this province would like some hint as to this government's thinking behind this kind of dictatorial provision, then we should remind them that when the municipalities of Ontario decided they wanted to provide some information on the tax bill to make it perfectly clear what the increase in taxes was all about, that it was the result of your downloading, you said they were not allowed to do that. You said it was not in the interests of your party and your government that they do that. That's what this veto provision is all about. You get to decide what it is that municipalities can and cannot hold referenda on. You get to decide what it is

that Ontario citizens may or may not offer their opinions on. That's what your provision is all about.

Yesterday you reversed engines and you said you were going to have to withdraw that other dictatorial provision that we brought to your attention. You said: "Just trust us. We're going to pull it away later on." You've got another provision just as dictatorial that is going to dictate how it is that municipalities may conduct referenda and what citizens may or may not offer their opinions on. Minister, will you now stand up and agree that this provision is also dictatorial and that you've got a responsibility now to withdraw it as well?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me make another quote for the record. The honourable member who asked that question, in a Liberal news release on August 24, 1999, said: "In my mind there's no question that transforming the seven urban local governments that we now have into a single city will save tax dollars, reduce bureaucracy and streamline services. It will also put Ottawa on a more even footing with other cities around the world when it comes to competing in today's global economy for investment and jobs."

I like that Dalton McGuinty. He gets it. The Dalton McGuinty of today doesn't get it and I disagree with him.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member for Windsor-St Clair, please come to order. Sorry, Windsor West come to order, please. I should have known that; I've said it enough times, and I say that in both cases.

PLUTONIUM TRANSPORT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Solicitor General. While you seem to be celebrating public safety in Ontario today, I want to ask you a question about public safety.

Earlier this week we asked the Premier to call Prime Minister Chrétien and to tell him to cancel the federal government's plan to ship weapons-grade plutonium across Ontario highways to Chalk River. You refused. Now we learn that one of the possible routes for this weapons-grade plutonium is along Highway 401 through the city of Toronto, the most densely populated part of Canada. We also learn that if there is an accident on the highway causing heat, you could have an 80-kilometre plume of nuclear contamination. We learn that police forces in Ontario have neither the equipment nor the training to handle this. The Americans have decided this is top secret. They're not going to tell you what highway it's going on or when.

How are you going to protect the public of Ontario if you don't know where it's being shipped, when it's being shipped and your own police forces haven't been trained to handle it? How are you going to do that?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): We all know that the federal government made the decision to bring this plutonium into this country. I certainly do call upon the federal government to make sure they

understand that public safety is of a concern in this province.

We've already heard from the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Transportation on this. I believe the federal government should pay some attention to public safety issues. As I understand it, the OPP have been consulted in terms of this transportation issue. If in fact this happens, I understand the OPP will be participating to make sure the public safety is ensured.

Mr Hampton: I want to contrast this government's response with that of the government of Michigan. The Attorney General of Michigan has written to the US federal government to say, "Don't use Michigan highways." She says, "As I am sure you are aware, this proposed shipment has raised grave concern among the citizens of Michigan as well as the citizens of other states."

Government members may choose to laugh about this. I suggest they should take it seriously.

A US federal judge in Michigan has granted an interim restraining order saying, "No transport through Michigan." You say, "Leave it up to the federal government." Look who's running this for the federal government: Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd, which has a commercial interest in this. They want to show that they can burn weapons-grade plutonium in their reactors. They think it will help them sell more reactors.

Minister, are you going to leave the public safety of Ontario citizens up to a corporation that has a commercial interest or are you going to act? Call the Prime Minister today and tell him that Ontario highways aren't available. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Clearly the federal government has to have a concern for public safety. I say to the member of the third party that if he expects Mr Chrétien to take my phone call, that's interesting since the justice committee wouldn't even listen while the justice minister of Ontario wanted to make representations about justice issues affecting people in Ontario.

The prime responsibility for this lies with the federal government. However, if in fact this does happen, the OPP will make sure that public safety, to the best of their ability, is taken into account.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): Minister, I ask you to try to understand the seriousness of this issue. The United States Department of Energy has confirmed that accompanying these shipments will be nuclear 007s with shoot-to-kill orders. First Nation communities along the Trans-Canada have said that they will blockade the road to prevent the shipment from passing through their land. Who will give the order to shoot, Atomic Energy of Canada?

Minister, armed road warriors, shoot-to-kill orders, inadequate safety precautions, no advance notice. You're the government of Ontario. It is your responsibility to take action to protect the citizens of Ontario. This is a ludicrous, dangerous situation. Will you stand in your place and say that you take this seriously and you will

use your power as the top cop in this province and put a stop to these shipments through our streets of Ontario?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Certainly, if this does happen, if the federal government decides that this will happen, then we will to the best of our ability at the Ontario Provincial Police try to ensure that the people of Ontario are safe.

1420

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Acting Premier. Could you please share with us today what the Premier's schedule is, what he's doing that he couldn't be here this afternoon.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Premier's schedule is fulfilling the commitments that we made in the Blueprint to the people of Ontario to make sure that we restore the economic well-being of this province after five years of your destructive policies.

Mr Hampton: As we just heard, there wasn't much of substance on the schedule.

Eight months ago the Premier was summonsed to answer questions put to him by lawyers asking him about his knowledge of events surrounding the death of Dudley George. On November 29, he sent a very high-priced lawyer, at taxpayers' expense, to ask for a delay so that he wouldn't have to answer these questions, to ask for a more suitable date. We now understand that your government has hired one of the most expensive lawyers in the province to find more ways to delay this matter.

The truth is going to come out. This issue is not going to go away. The question is, how much taxpayers' money are you going to waste trying to avoid the inevitable questions that the Premier is going to have to answer? How much taxpayers' money will you waste trying to delay answering the questions that should have been answered two years ago?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I know the Attorney General will want to answer this question.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As the member opposite is a lawyer, he knows or should know that in civil litigation, under the rules, sometimes a judge is appointed to deal with matters such as those he raises here today. Indeed, that's the situation here. The notice of appointment, the notice of examination for the Premier was struck out by the judge the other day. I'm sure the member knows that and I'm sure the member doesn't want to mislead the House about that because he would want the House to know the exact way that the litigation is progressing.

He'd also know, since he is a lawyer, that there are often notices of examination served but that it's unusual for them not to be done on consent, which is indeed the reason why the judge who is managing the motions in the matter has got involved and is dealing with it, I should add, at the request of the crown lawyers, so that he'll

know, as a lawyer, civil litigation can proceed in an orderly way.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): In the absence of the Premier here to accept responsibility for the health care chaos in the province, I'll return to the Minister of Health.

Minister, I want to raise with you another troubling question, in this case the debate about who is responsible for cancer care patients having to wait for care.

I want to bring to your attention the case of Mr Payzant from Toronto, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer on September 13. He was referred on an urgent basis to the Princess Margaret Hospital on October 8. Two weeks later he was told by the Princess Margaret that they could not take him and that he'd probably have to go out of province for treatment.

Mr Payzant received a letter from Cancer Care Ontario on October 25 telling him that his file was being reviewed and that he would be informed as to whether he would be a candidate for re-referral. He has not yet heard from Cancer Care Ontario.

On November 26, Mr Payzant was told that he could after all be treated at the Princess Margaret, eight weeks after his referral. He is now being told his costs will not be covered.

Do you agree that Mr Payzant has fallen between the cracks of a cancer care system that simply is not working?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, our government has certainly indicated that we recognize the need to ensure that people in the province have access to cancer services. We have increased spending on cancer services by about \$155 million since 1995. We set up Cancer Care Ontario in order to ensure that there could be coordination and better services provided to individuals.

However, I think it's important to keep in mind that despite all of the investments that are being made, the incidence of cancer across Ontario continues to increase at a rate of about 3% or 4% and we are continuing to invest dollars to ensure that people can have access to the services as quickly as possible.

Mrs McLeod: What seems to be missing in all of your answers to these questions is a recognition that what we're talking about here is not some kind of abstract, theoretical waiting list. We're talking about real people, who are seriously ill, who have to wait in ambulances because they can't get into emergency rooms, who have to wait on stretchers in emergency rooms because they can't get hospital beds, who have to wait to see a physician or have to wait to get care with the knowledge that they have a cancer that's growing and threatening their lives.

People like Mr Payzant don't live comfortably with that knowledge. They want treatment, they want it right

away, and your answer to them is: "Don't worry. We're making progress; 35% of people are now seen in the recommended time. Our goal is to have 50% of people with cancer seen within the recommended waiting times." What about the other 50% who aren't going to get treated, who don't know when they're going to get treated, people who like Mr Payzant, who sought his own treatment and is now being told his costs won't be covered?

I ask you, will you take direct responsibility to ensure that our cancer services, all of our cancer services, whether delivered by CCO or Princess Margaret, are coordinated and that patients like Mr Payzant receive timely information about the options open to them even if you can't guarantee them that they can get care in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think the member understands full well that we recognize the period and the emotions that cancer patients have. That's the reason why our government has made the commitment to invest the \$155 million. That's why we have set up Cancer Care Ontario.

We are trying to do everything we can to reduce the stress, to reduce the burden, to ensure that the waiting time and the waiting list for patients throughout the province can be reduced. In fact, that's one of the reasons we have indicated that we are the expanding cancer centres across Ontario.

We have new cancer centres that are being constructed in Mississauga and in Durham and in the region of Waterloo. We have a cancer centre in St Catharines. We have another satellite centre that is going up in Sault Ste Marie. It is because we know of the personal hardship and we know of the stress, and it's because we want to do everything we can. In fact—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mrs McLeod: On a point of privilege, Mr Chair: May I ask whether or not I would have permission to send Mr Payzant's file to the minister so that she may review this case personally?

The Speaker: I don't believe you need to ask permission to send it over.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): My question today is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

As the member for Scarborough Southwest, I'm proud to have Centennial College as part of my constituency. Every year, thousands of young Ontarians arrive at Centennial and graduate with good, high-paying jobs. Many of these students rely on the Ontario student assistance program as well as other government programs to help finance their education and achieve their goals.

Over the past few weeks, there has been a confusing array of allegations swirling about the other side of the House about the government's plans to help students with the costs of a college or university education.

As many of my constituents in secondary school and their parents plan the next steps of their education, they would like to see some reliable information about the government's plans. What can you say to the parents and the students in my constituency who are concerned about the future of student financial assistance?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): In response to the member from Scarborough Southwest, the great home of Centennial College, I'd like to assure the members of this Legislative Assembly and the people of Ontario that there will be a space for every qualified, motivated student to attend our colleges and universities in the future, as there is now and as there has been in the past.

Provincial support for post-secondary education has never been higher. As a matter of fact, it's \$3.5 billion now, growing to \$4 billion next year.

I think the important fact for members of this Legislative Assembly, especially those who are intentionally, in my view, some days misleading our students, is that we have increased student assistance since 1995-96 by 30%.

1430

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I try to listen carefully. I don't know if she said some members were trying to mislead. If she did, I would ask her to withdraw that.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I would happily withdraw that.

I would say that unfortunately for the members in this House there are some individuals who should know better and should be telling the public that in fact we have increased student assistance by 30% over 1995-96 levels. That's very important because these young people need to be reassured that there will be a space for them and there will be the financial assistance they need.

Mr Newman: The parents and students in my riding are going to be glad to hear that this government is prepared to help them achieve their goals.

Having spoken to the concerns of today's students, I'm also concerned about the impact of Ontario's economic success and population growth on our post-secondary system. As the minister knows, post-secondary education is an important part of the government's plan to build a modern and globally competitive economy here in Ontario, and we all know that a skilled and educated workforce is more productive, flexible and better able to prosper in a new economy.

As Ontario's economy continues to grow, demand for college and university education will almost certainly grow as well. Minister, what steps will you be taking to ensure that our post-secondary education system is prepared to accommodate Ontario's remarkable growth and ensure that we have the education and training necessary to compete in the global economy?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: In response to the question, I think everyone agrees that the great competition for our province and our country is that young people get a post-

secondary education, the best in the world. Quality education is what we stand for in this province and what we promise to provide to our students, as we do as I speak.

We are taking very firm steps to put in place a system for growth in the student population which the member for Scarborough Southwest has brought to our attention today. We have announced \$742 million in new capital through the SuperBuild Growth Fund to build these new buildings at our colleges and our universities, and we're working with the best advice we can get from our colleges, our universities and our students. I can assure you we're also designing scholarships. We're not just building buildings but are aiming for the top scholarships, \$35 million to help more than 10,000 students, starting next September.

I think this is a great success story for our young people and I'm proud to be part of this government.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): In the absence of the Premier, my question is to the Minister of Health.

ATTENDANCE OF MEMBERS

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As you know, it's out of order to draw to the attention of the House the absence of any member of this Legislature. This has been done five or six times by the opposition and we find it intolerable that they continue to break the rules of this House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. While I'm hearing a point of order, I would appreciate it if members are not shouting across at each other.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre, come to order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, on the point of order: Given how seldom this House has sat in the last year and the fact that the Premier has failed to attend more than once a week in this time to answer questions, as is part of our parliamentary tradition, I would hope that that would be kept—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Come to order while I hear the point of order, government members.

Mr Duncan: Our parliamentary tradition dictates that we have question period so that ministers, particularly the Premier, can be asked questions. For the Premier to show up once a week is simply unacceptable and unanswerable to the people—

The Speaker: Would the member take his seat.

The government House leader is right. The standing orders are very clear. I let it go the first couple of times.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I will say very clearly, the standing orders do not allow reference to the absence of a

member or a minister. I let it go a couple of times; I will not let it go any longer. I will call the members on either side to order if they refer to anybody being away. What is going to happen, I know, is that the government members are going to be doing it and we're going to be back and forth. We're going to start doing this right from now: No member is going to be allowed to refer to any member being here or not being here.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question was intended for the Premier. However, it's to the Minister of Health.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Your members were shouting just as much, I say to the third party. Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, we're all aware of the severe doctor shortage in the province. Today I want to bring to your attention two other areas of this province where there is a severe need for family doctors.

The St Lawrence District Medical Centre in Lansdowne, Leeds and Grenville will be closing their doors because they can't find a replacement doctor. Some 1,200 patients will be forced to travel to walk-in clinics in Kingston and Brockville for their medical attention.

In Havelock, Peterborough county, I recently—last week—met with the town council, which operates a rural clinic. They will shortly be without a family doctor as well, stranding a community of over 3,500 people, which goes to over 10,000 people in the summer, without any medical support.

Minister, what will you do today? Don't talk to me about the McKendry report, because all you're going to do there is set up an expert panel as to how to deal with long-term issues. What are you going to do today? Why don't you get together with the OMA and the College of Physicians and Surgeons and immediately implement the unanimous decision of this House, Mr Ruprecht's private member's bill that was passed last week, asking you to do something about getting—

The Speaker: The member's time is up.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The entire issue of physician supply and distribution is certainly one that we have focused a tremendous amount of attention and effort on. As the member knows, we have taken some very unprecedented steps.

This is an issue of very long standing, and I'm very pleased to say that at the present time, as a result of the initiatives that have been undertaken by our government to strengthen the economy of this province and reduce taxes and red tape, the number of physicians who used to go to the United States has decreased dramatically. In fact, between 1997 and 1998, the rate of physicians

leaving Ontario has decreased by 37%. Thanks to those efforts, we are retaining physicians. We also have in place many initiatives to encourage physicians to go to areas where they are most needed, and we will continue to address those issues.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, you just don't get it. Your own ministry records show that we are at least 422 family doctors short in Ontario. Why don't you do something about it?

The township of Havelock recently put in a request for proposal in conjunction with the Peterborough health centre for a nurse practitioner for their centre. I was told today by your ministry that it will be late winter before this issue is made, whether or not they will be successful in their proposal.

That's too late. The people in Havelock and Peterborough county, and their duly elected council, need action today. Rather than passing the buck and not doing anything, why don't you get together with the OMA and the College of Physicians and Surgeons and take action now so that over 100 communities that have a shortage of doctors of anywhere between your figure of 422 and our figure of 700 can be dealt with immediately? Do it today.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I think the member knows that in an attempt to ensure that we did have appropriate distribution of doctors throughout Ontario, some measures were introduced that indicated that if you were going to be staying in an overserved area, you would be discounted. However, even measures such as that have not led to doctors going to areas where they are most needed.

Again, I would remind the member that we are the very first government to have identified this as a problem. We have Dr McKendry taking a look at the scope and the cause. He is bringing in his report, and if there are some additional short-term initiatives, we are certainly prepared to introduce them.

Again, I would just quote from the ICES study. It did find that the number of actively practising doctors has increased from 1991-92 to 1997-98—

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Health, time is up.

1440

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. In an age when most people in this province have access to the world through everything from radio, TV, newspapers, and now by the Internet, the concept of losing our local identity becomes a real reality. I believe that we can attempt to protect our local culture and our local history by promoting rural museums and heritage standards across this province. They identify the culture of our communities and educate us about the history of the respective area. That is why I am concerned about the loss of funding to the Barnum House Museum located in

my riding near Grafton. This was following a review by the community museum operating grants program.

Minister, could you please explain why Barnum House did not pass the evaluation process?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): I would like to thank the member for the question. Let me say, first, I know the member has quite an interest in his local community and in a number of the things that go on there so I take his concerns very seriously.

When we were giving grants to museums in Ontario, in 1982 standards were developed that local museums should be meeting. In 1997, the auditor suggested that at the ministry we were not ensuring that we were living up to those standards, that we were measuring museums by the standards we had in place.

We looked at the standards again in 1997, 1998 and 1999. There are six standards that a museum across the province is to be judged by. It's to be judged by the research it does, by the collection record management it has, staff training, exhibitions, the conservation standards and the standards for interpretation and education programs.

When we looked at this museum—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry, the minister's time is up.

Mr Galt: Thank you, Minister, for explaining the program standards.

The board of directors in my area have carried out all kinds of activities from barbecues to fundraising dinners. They've had dozens of volunteers giving of their time and of their talents. This board of directors is absolutely exhausted, and by the end of March, they're going to be down to three.

The criterion such as a full-time curator may be just fine for Toronto and big cities, but it really doesn't fit rural Ontario. I believe it's important. By remembering our past, we can create a blueprint for the future.

Minister, what is the government going to do to help small museums with day-to-day operations in this province, particularly the Barnum House Museum in Grafton?

Hon Mrs Johns: We make the commitment to the member today that we certainly have every intention of working with small museums in their day-to-day operations. You're quite right that not every one can have all the services and the staff that are required by something like some of the big Toronto museums.

What we've agreed to do, as a result of your questions, is to look at the standards next year. We've got the community museums in Ontario to come together to talk about standards, to make sure they're appropriate for different museums. We've asked them to report to us to by December 23. That letter was sent out in October or November. We'll ask them to look at those standards.

Let me make a commitment to the member who is so passionate about this. I will work with you to make sure that we look at every standard. I will work with every community museum to ensure that they have an

opportunity to understand the benchmarks. It's important to have standards and benchmarks, and we're going to continue to work on those. We'll help any museum that wants to—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the same minister, the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. I've got to tell you, Minister—

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): You didn't like my answer?

Mr Marchese: I didn't like yours, and I'm not sure I'm going to like hers either.

Students and parents across Ontario are outraged over this insulting little millennium project pamphlet of yours. The students are upset that you spent \$2.5 million to produce this booklet; even more, they're upset that you've spent over half a million to courier this across the province to every elementary and high school in the system. I've learned you're spending another \$30 a pop for another millennium book that you're going to be sending. People are outraged.

A teacher from Sir Frederick Banting says: "I do not have decent books or enough books to distribute to my classes. I am currently using filthy old books that should've been thrown away long ago." That's the reality. How do you find the money to spend on such luxuries when you're bleeding the school system?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Let me say first off that I believe that any time we ask young children to get involved in thinking about where their future is and thinking about 2020 and thinking about where Ontario is going to be in the future, that's a good use of taxpayer dollars.

But let me say that I'm not the only one who thinks that. I have a letter in my hand from the director of education of the Sudbury board that says:

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your government for the Ontario 2000 book. These books will allow our young people an opportunity to read about the aspirations of other young Ontarians and to record their thoughts for the entire year. I know that you have received some significant negative comments about this project. Don't let these negative individuals deter you from this excellent project. Negative people never lead, they only react."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Supplementary?

Mr Marchese: I have no doubt that—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Minister Ecker, please.

Speaker, I have no doubt that this Tory member, director of education, supports this. I don't have any doubts about that. But the students and parents and teachers are hurting. That's why this is fuelling the fury

across Ontario. That's money wasted on a luxury when students are being deprived of music, art and personal safety programs. That's what we're dealing with.

I question your judgment, students question your judgment, and I've got to tell you something else: Taxpayers across Ontario are questioning your judgment. You're going to have to justify this waste beyond one Tory director from Sudbury and you're going to have to face the taxpayers across the province. Deal with that, Minister.

Hon Mrs Johns: I can't miss the irony. When we were elected in 1995, the province was \$11 billion in debt as a result of this party.

Let me say that we spent a fair amount of time looking for ways that we could recognize the millennium, because it's very important to the young people of the province. We went out, we asked people what they wanted us to do for the millennium. People said: "Whatever you do, include young people in this, because this is really their year. This is the year where they move forward and they're able to view the future."

I went out and got requests for proposals and spent less than \$1 per student to make sure they had a record of the year 2000. In that book they have the ability to record. The irony of this is—he's saying that directors are the only people—that I had the teachers' unions help me pick the stories and get the book prepared. It's a wide breadth of teachers and students in the province who put their—

The Speaker: Thank you. New question.

1450

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. I want to ask you about the emergency room crisis you've created in the city of Hamilton. Let me inform you. I have information that shows that in the months of October and November, almost 20% of the time the four Hamilton hospitals were in critical care bypass. McMaster, General, St Joseph's and the Henderson were turning emergency patients away. The four hospitals were on emergency critical care bypass for almost 1,000 hours in this two-month period.

I don't want to hear your garbage about 1985, 1990 or 1995, Minister. What I want to know clearly is, do you find it acceptable that your policy of cuts and lack of health care funding and your restructuring policies have caused this crisis? Clearly you have allowed this to happen. You are jeopardizing patients' lives. Will you tell us today exactly what you're going to do, starting tomorrow, to fix the situation in Hamilton?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Let's set the record straight. There has been no lack of health funding from this government. The only government to reduce health funding is the federal government. They have reduced funding to this province by about \$2.8 billion. Our government has increased funding from \$17.4 billion to \$20.6 billion this

year with a further 20%. So for that member to say there are any funding cuts is wrong.

I would also indicate that we have added money, over \$300 million, to respond to the whole issue of emergency rooms. Unfortunately the member's party, when they were in office, didn't address this issue. This is an issue of at least 15 years' standing and if the action had been taken then, we would be further along the way to progress today.

Mr Agostino: Minister, you have cut almost \$1 billion out of hospital funding in this province. You can sit there and believe it is acceptable under your watch as minister that in two months, for over 1,000 hours, the Hamilton hospitals are on critical care bypass. Do you think that's good performance? Do you think that's acceptable? It is a disgrace.

The problem is that you have spent four years making empty promises. The problem is not simply the funding to emergency rooms. It's lack of beds for long-term care. A year ago you announced 600 long-term-care beds for Hamilton. Do you know how many have been built? Zero. Zip. None. In one year not one of those beds has been built. That is the problem. That is why we have this situation we're facing today. I'm sick and tired of your empty rhetoric and garbage. Patients' lives are in jeopardy. Hamiltonians are going to die because of your actions.

Minister, again, how are you going to fix the situation and how are you going to ensure that every patient who needs an emergency room gets one from this unacceptable, disgraceful situation you have caused in Hamilton?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Mr Speaker, I'm rather shocked at the rudeness of the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

The member for Hamilton East has asked his question. I would appreciate it if he would listen to the answer.

Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: I'd like to quote from the Hamilton Spectator on March 31, 1999, where Dean Olson, vice-president of patient services at St Joseph's Hospital, says she's very delighted about the \$895,000 the hospital is receiving. "The funding will be used to increase the number of nurses at times when the hospital's emergency room is overcrowded, she said. Olson added the money will also let the hospital open beds it doesn't regularly have open and staffed, so that it can better get through busy times."

We have increased funding to Hamilton emergency rooms by some \$7 million since—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister take her seat.

Order. I'd appreciate it if members do not yell back and forth to each other when I'm trying to listen to the answer. I need to hear the answer and I can't when members are shouting across at each other.

Minister of Health.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have increased the funding for Hamilton emergency rooms by over \$7 million since

1998. We are providing an additional \$7 million to Hamilton for nurses, and since 1998 we have increased long-term-care funding by \$9.4 million. In fact, after 10 years of no construction of any long-term-care beds, it is our government that is finally adding 20,000 beds across this province. I'd also like to add, the Liberal government cut the hospital beds in this province—10,000 beds.

NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I've decided that my question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Constituents of mine in the riding of Durham on occasion have to travel through northern Ontario on business, either truck drivers or business people, or people on vacation, but all people in Ontario are concerned that there are harsh climate conditions in northern Ontario that can cause very difficult road conditions, further impacting transportation and safety across the province. Minister, you're responsible for the north. What steps have you taken to ensure that northerners and other Ontarians have first-rate safe highways in northern Ontario?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the member for Durham very much for his question and for his interest in northern Ontario and, importantly, in northern Ontario highways. I'm pleased to report to the House that this past year the Mike Harris government has invested a record \$202 million in northern Ontario highways, including significant investments in the four-lanings of Highway 11 and Highway 69, the gate highways, as well as rehabilitation in other parts of northern Ontario. That stands as a record, in fact a 30% increase over last year's funding, which was similarly a record amount of funding of northern Ontario highways. Since 1996, \$650 million has been invested by the Mike Harris government in northern Ontario highways.

Mr O'Toole: I know you will work with our Minister of Transportation. It's clear to me that you are the voice of the north. That's clear to me. I can see that.

However, you've indicated that your ministry and our government have surpassed the level of any governments of the past. Minister, could you tell us a little bit about the spending levels that have far surpassed the Liberal and NDP governments' commitment to the north?

Hon Mr Hudak: I thank the member for the question. I'm very pleased that he raised this point in the House. I think it's very important to demonstrate to the members of the House and those watching on television in Ontario and in northern Ontario the difference between the commitment of the Mike Harris government in northern Ontario and that of the previous governments. In fact—

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I wonder why you didn't get elected in—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Sudbury, come to order.

Mr Bartolucci: It's because you make fun of us.

The Speaker: Order. Member for Sudbury, this is his last warning. The next time I will name him.

Hon Mr Hudak: In fact, the record shows that between 1995 and 1999 the Mike Harris government invested over \$750 million in northern Ontario highways. This compares to the NDP government, which invested about \$650 million or so. I think I understand why the member for Sudbury is yelling and heckling, because under his government, they invested a mere \$420 million, which is barely half the level.

Mr Bartolucci: On a point of order, Speaker: I respect the Chair. I was not yelling and I was not heckling when he was answering. You told me to keep quiet, Speaker. I was not yelling and I was not heckling and I want him to correct the record.

The Speaker: For the member's mother, who I know watches on occasion, let the record show that after I warned him he did not heckle. But I say to his mother, before that he was definitely heckling.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): On a point of order: I'd like to correct the record. I believe that I said 57 emergency room expansions. That should be 56.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for correcting the record. Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon Mr Hudak: To sum up my comments to the member for Sudbury and the other members of the House, the record of the Mike Harris government is \$750 million in northern highways; the record of the Liberal government is \$420 million, barely half of the commitment of the Mike Harris government in northern Ontario, a record that we should all be very proud of.

1500

The Speaker: New question.

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): In the absence of two cabinet ministers, I'll direct my question to the Acting Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. To the member: I know he's just asking a question. I said earlier that we aren't going to refer to any ministers being away. I don't want to get into the technicalities.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Labour, come to order, please.

When you refer to it, it gets one step removed. I would ask all members—because if not, I know what will happen. It will be coming across the floor and we will just have chaos in this matter. I would ask all members to please be considerate and not refer to members being here. Sorry to interrupt the member. Go ahead.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock.

Mr Kormos: I understand the Speaker's rigid rulings regarding disruptions during question period, and I'm not

going to suggest that members of this caucus haven't engaged in them. However, when the clock continues to run during those disruptions, you know full well—and you've referred to this, Speaker—that at the end of the day it denies our modest caucus access to that fourth question.

Please, Speaker, I would submit to you that it would only be fair that when the authors or sources of the disruption are a particular caucus, if there's going to be a penalty imposed, that penalty should be imposed on that caucus and not on this caucus, or, quite frankly, either of the others. I would submit that today is an illustration of the impact of that.

The Speaker: The number of questions we got on up until this week has actually been a record. It is my intention to try to get to the questions of the third party. I know there have been some occasions where people have used points of order or long answers to try and prevent that. If I see that happening, I've said very clearly, and if I see it is the official opposition, I will attempt to stop the clock to get to that. This week has been rather hectic for a number of reasons and it was difficult to bring the House back under control, but I assure you I will continue to do that.

I may at this point say as well that on points of order I'm going to be a lot stricter. In the beginning I wanted to leave a lot of leeway, I wanted a lot of time for points of order, but if I can immediately assess a point of order is frivolous or something to deny time, I will have to cut the members off. I know all members are very good. They try to use things like points of order for valid points of order. I must admit that over the last little while there have been some members using points of order to get across their debate, and very clearly that shouldn't happen. I want to be fair. In the beginning I tried to bend over backwards in favour of the members, because I honestly and truly believe most of them are doing it in the best interests of this House.

I will attempt to get down to those questions. I know we probably haven't since early last week, but that is my goal and intention. I will make sure this House does not become disruptive until we get to the third party's question. If, over the next week or so, we do not get to that, I'm going to have to assess how I'm doing my job, whether I need to be stricter, whether I need to throw people out more quickly.

As you know, I'm new to this job and I'm trying to work it out. I will be in contact, as I have been, with the member's House leader, who has advised me of the situation, and I will attempt to get as many questions on as I can. We were doing very well in the first couple of weeks. I understand that towards the end of sessions, when we sit late, tempers tend to rise and we get more controversial bills. But I'm determined to try to get down to those questions because I know it is vital to the third party, and in most cases we're going to be able to. If we do not, I will have to decide how I'm going to run this House in order to get to it.

I gave this undertaking to the House leader of the third party. I will attempt to get down to the question for the third party. If I do see it being points of order on the part of the opposition or the government side, I will have to take action. Up to now I've left it in the House's hands; I may have to be a little bit stricter.

I thank the member for Niagara Centre and I can assure him and the third party House leader that I am monitoring it, to the point where I know exactly how long the questions are every day.

Member for Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, with 22 seconds left for the question.

RENDERING INDUSTRY

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Acting Premier, who's here. Minister, as you know, there's a serious problem in rural eastern Ontario regarding the rendering industry—in your part of Ontario. The ability to do this important job to remove dead and crippled animals from our farms is in jeopardy due to a drastic drop in prices under your government. Farmers need this service and so does the rest of society if we're going to protect our health and our environment. What are you doing about this problem? Will you take the advice of the eastern Ontario farm recycling association and AMO to preserve this essential service in rural Ontario to protect the public health and the environment?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): This is a serious issue. I know that the Minister of Agriculture is dealing with this issue. He's meeting with the people affected and the groups to try to solicit input on a solution.

If the Liberal position is that we should subsidize this industry, I don't think that should be jumped to. We've tried to cancel subsidies and corporate welfare. The agricultural community that I've talked to, and I represent quite a large portion of that, have told me that it is a serious problem but they think they can work through and find some solutions. I know the Minister of Agriculture is working on that.

I would mention that he's down with other ministers of agriculture trying to make sure that Ontario gets its fair share from the federal Liberals. It's not fair that our farmers have to compete with the world, let alone other provinces where they get more subsidies from federal tax dollars. So he's trying very hard to represent the Ontario farmers to make sure we get our fair share from the federal Liberal policies.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would bring to the members' attention in the members' west gallery Hugh O'Neil, the former member for Quinte and a member of Parliament in the 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th parliaments.

I would also bring to their attention, way up in the east gallery, so far up I almost can't see him, Murray Elston,

the former member for Huron-Bruce and a member also of the 32nd, 33rd, 34th and 35th parliaments.

1510

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Monday, the House leader of the official opposition raised a point of order relating to Bill 25. Since I'm anxious to give due consideration to the arguments of the omnibus nature of this bill, I'm informing the House that I'm prepared to hear, for a short period tomorrow following routine proceedings, points of order on this matter. At that time the arguments should be concise and to the point since I don't want to unduly infringe on the business of House.

I thank the member for his point of order. I thank the Deputy Speaker. I know he indicated that while there wasn't an opportunity and time to hear the argument on the matter since one had not had the opportunity to read the bill, there would be an opportunity at a later date. Therefore, there will be an opportunity tomorrow for the government House leader, the House leader for the official opposition and the third party to give their points of order. I look forward to hearing them tomorrow.

The member for Trinity-Spadina on a point of order.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Speaker, by way of explanation, I was to have introduced a bill earlier on, but unfortunately I didn't receive it until termination of bills. So I'm asking for unanimous consent to introduce that bill now, please, to revert to introduction of bills.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (RENTAL HOUSING PROTECTION), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LA PROTECTION DES LOGEMENTS LOCATIFS

Mr Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Municipal Act to authorize certain municipalities to restrict the demolition of rental residential buildings / Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités en vue d'autoriser certaines municipalités à restreindre la démolition d'immeubles d'habitation locatifs.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member, for a short explanation.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): The bill amends the Municipal Act to allow the council of a local municipality with a population of 25,000 or more to adopt a bylaw prohibiting the demolition of apartment buildings unless one of a list of conditions is met.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to return to the response you made to the member from Niagara Centre. I'm going to say quite frankly I was quite encouraged by what I heard you say, and I'm probably going to offend some of my friends in simply encouraging you to follow up on the observations that you made. I know that you will. You've had a difficult week. We are glad to have you back and we see you in improved health.

I speak only for myself in this matter, but I am increasingly concerned about the deterioration of the tone in this place. I am no poster boy for good behaviour; I'm the first one to admit that I have done my share of misconduct. We are, I think, seriously seeing an institution die before our very eyes. For that we are all responsible, and we have got to do something about improving the tone of this place. That does not—

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I'm going to say to the member who is making a comment, we'd better all be careful about how we play the game within the rules, because one of the problems that I see is that there are things that are allowed theoretically under the rules that are incendiary, and I think we all know what they are. Regardless of whether we're a front-bench member of the government or a back-bench member of the opposition, we have a responsibility as honourable members to do within the best of our ability and the political temper and passion of the moment honourable things.

I just wanted to say that I was very encouraged and I want, as one member, to stand up and thank you for the observations that you brought here today. I hope, working with House leaders and all members, that we can have a very lively partisan debate within this place, most especially in question period, while at the same time resisting the temptation to bury and render unto complete irrelevance this parliamentary place.

I think we are very close to needing a funeral. I hope I'm just overly sceptical on a cold December day, and I take my seat again by thanking you for your observations and encouraging you to do the very things that you said you were going to do, in part with the House leaders. As you will know from your hockey-playing days, every game needs a very tough, fair-minded arbiter, and I'm quite confident that you're up to that task.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Thank you very much. I appreciate that, and I'm sure those are the sentiments of a lot of the members. I also should say, as one of the veterans in here, I appreciate his comments. There are often times that I pick out people who are offending. It goes without saying there are numerous members who ask good questions, sit quietly, and ministers who try to answer questions and then sit quietly. So I must admit the offenders are few and far between, but we must all work

together to make a better House. Hopefully with the words and comments from the members we will be able to do that.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: With your permission and the indulgence of the House, I want to respond to the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I'd also, under your advice, actually make reference to more or less what the member has said but also the general tone. If you were to reflect for some time on the Hansard record over the last number of days, I'd say the week, I've noticed a tone change. There is a certain meanness, and if you are to do any deliberating on this particular point of order, I would encourage you to look to the record, to tone and wording. The ruling in your decision I know will apply to all members, and I can attest that I would say I'm sensitive to the tone in this House, which has diminished.

The Speaker: It seems we have all parties' co-operation. I'm sure that will be very helpful.

PETITIONS

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that amount revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

"Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

"Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

"Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

"Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law."

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I'm continuing to receive petitions from Cathy Walker of the Canadian Auto Workers regarding carcinogens.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances (carcinogens);

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances in the workplace;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

My NDP colleagues and I continue to support these petitioners.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I have a petition signed by approximately 2,500 people, with another 600 that weren't on the proper form. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas on February 8, 1997, the citizens of Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook and Stoney Creek voted 95% against the supercity of Hamilton being imposed upon them; and

"Whereas the only two elected government Hamilton-Wentworth MPPs both campaigned against the supercity of Hamilton being imposed upon their constituents;

"Whereas the duly elected council of Ancaster, Dundas and Flamborough voted to merge in the city of Wentworth and duly elected councils of Glanbrook and Stoney Creek have voted to merge in the city of Stoney Creek; and

"Whereas opinion polls have consistently confirmed that the majority of residents of Ancaster, Dundas, Flamborough, Glanbrook and Stoney Creek are strongly opposed to a supercity of Hamilton being imposed upon them; and

"Whereas the government made pre-election commitments not to impose the supercity on the residents of Hamilton-Wentworth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"The government of Ontario must keep its pre-election promises and accordingly not impose its supercity of Hamilton on the residents of the current region of Hamilton-Wentworth."

I support the petition and I attach my signature to it.

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): I have a petition of great concern. It's addressed to the Parliament to Ontario. It reads like this:

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

"Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

"Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

"Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

"Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law."

I'll affix my signature in agreement with this.

1520

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north, which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical location;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

It's signed by a number of concerned constituents and again I'll affix my signature in agreement with their concerns.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As my colleague for Thunder Bay-Atikokan will confirm, the petitions are coming in from all over the north relating to the northern health travel grant underfunding. I have 1,500 signed petitions here. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available resources; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north, which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical location;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

It's coming from all across the north and I am very pleased to add my name to this petition of 1,500 people.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition that's been signed by a number of Ontarians sent to us by Cathy Walker of the Canadian Auto Workers. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances;

"Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens;

"Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances at work;

"Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at any physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer and that the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation."

I have added my signature to this.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, but I might add that I'm presenting this petition on behalf of the member for Scarborough Centre, Marilyn Mushinski, who has led the fight, led the challenge, for dignity in Ontario.

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to a pass to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crime;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets and communities;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I am pleased to support and sign this petition along with my constituents.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): This petition regarding the Truth about Ipperwash Act is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas early in September of 1995 there occurred a series of events involving the Premier of Ontario and members of his government, the Ontario Provincial Police and demonstrators representing members of the First Nations at Ipperwash Provincial Park;

"Whereas the events led to the death of Dudley George, one of the First Nations demonstrators;

"Whereas these events have raised concerns among all parties in the Legislature and many Ontarians;

"Whereas there has been introduced in the House a piece of legislation known as the Truth About Ipperwash Act;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"In order that there is an answer to concerns of the Legislature and Ontarians regarding the events at Ipperwash, the members of the Legislative Assembly vote in favour of the Truth About Ipperwash Act."

I support that and I affix my signature.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas 13 people died during the first seven months of 1999 on Highway 401 between London and Windsor; and

"Whereas traffic levels on all sections of Highway 401 continue to increase; and

"Whereas Canada's number one trade and travel route was designed in the 1950s for fewer vehicles and lighter trucks; and

"Whereas road funding is almost completely paid through vehicle permit and driving licence fees; and

"Whereas Ontario road users pay 28 cents per litre of tax on gasoline, adding up to over \$2.7 billion in provincial gas taxes and over \$2.3 billion in federal gas taxes;

"We, the undersigned members of the Canadian Automobile Association and other residents of Ontario,

respectfully request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately upgrade Highway 401 to at least a six-lane highway with full paved shoulders and rumble strips; and

"We respectfully request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario place firm pressure on the federal government to invest its gasoline tax revenue in road safety improvements in Ontario."

This is signed by a number of residents from Chatham-Kent like Mary Jane Clements and Caleb Coatsworth, and I affix my name to it.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a petition signed by over 4,000 people in northwestern Ontario.

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services is currently engaged in a restructuring process across all communities in Ontario which will affect all people and their families supported by developmental services; and

"Whereas the consultation process was selective and limited; and

"Whereas those who require services are being pitted against those who have services; and

"Whereas service to one group should not be at the expense of another regardless of age or language; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services corporate agenda is one of wholesale destruction of the support system for the vulnerable; and

"Whereas the corporate agenda will threaten the health, safety and, likely, the lives of many disabled people;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to stop this destructive restructuring process and provide adequate funding for quality services to the developmentally disabled."

I have affixed my signature to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographic locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I proudly affix my signature to these petitions.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system, when Bill 23 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered for third reading;

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the order for third reading of the bill may then immediately be called. When the order for third reading is called, the remainder of the sessional day shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill. At 5:55 pm or 9:25 pm, as the case may be on such day, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment;

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "Deferred Votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Flaherty has moved government notice of motion number 19. The Chair recognizes Mr Flaherty.

Hon Mr Flaherty: No, Speaker, I'm not going to speak to it.

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you for the opportunity to speak once again on a time allocation motion, which is a motion shutting off the debate on yet another piece of legislation under the auspices of this government.

I want to say, first of all, that it's lamentable. I think we're probably over 100 such motions since the Conservative government has been in power; at least it seems that is the case. It's become rather routine in this House that rather than debating a specific piece of legislation and the merits of that legislation, we spend the time debating a time allocation motion. That motion, for the consumption of the public, is a motion which no longer allows further debate or severely restricts further debate on a piece of legislation.

I'm going to remind people again that this House did not sit for more than seven days previous to the fall sitting of the House; that is, it did not sit in January, February, March or most of April. I think it sat a few days in April and then we were into an election.

Then instead of bringing the House back, perhaps in the summer if there was legislation of great importance—it wasn't as though it was a brand-new government and there would be a legitimate excuse or an expectation that the government was going to take a longer time after being re-elected or elected, as it may be with a new government, that they might take an extra couple of months to organize. That's certainly understandable. But instead we have the Harris government wait until almost the end of October to bring the House back into session and then rush into evening sittings.

This is not good for the legislation we have before us. I know there are those out there, and some of them are no longer with us in this Legislature but some of them still are, who believe this is great, efficient government. I call upon even the right-wing news media, the right-wing segment of the news media, who are in love with this government's policies—at least editorialists who work for the Hollinger and Southam newspapers and some others who are favourable in terms with what this government does—to chastise this government and call it to account for what it is doing to the democratic system.

My colleague Mr Conway made an astute observation which affected, I think, all of us in this House today. I don't think anyone can plead not guilty to participating in the sometimes raucous debate that takes place in the House. It's a question whether that is a good debate or not. There are occasions, and it's a British parliamentary tradition, where we're going to see interjections in a timely fashion or interjections which are relevant to the case.

When it degenerates into simply a shouting match and wild applause on both sides of the House when anybody scores a point, it hardly appears then to be a good debating forum. It's not just debate for the sake of debate, it's not just debate for the sake of canvassing a number of issues; it's debate for the sake of looking at various pieces of legislation in detail and perhaps persuading the government it should make change.

One of the frustrations that members of all sides of the House would have is that very seldom are there changes made to pieces of legislation brought forward. The government will say it pre-consulted, and sometimes it does pre-consult. I'm sure virtually always it consults with certain segments of the population. But the ultimate bills that we see in this House are really not reflective of a wide consultation. I'm fair-minded enough to know that a government is going to have to ultimately make its own decision as to what it will include in a bill. But this government is very exclusive in the way it deals with its legislation.

Because the House has been reduced in size, and there are those who talk about the virtues of fewer politicians—again Mr Conway made a very good speech the other evening where he said, "You know, it's a very dangerous practice to engage in." I know it's fashionable. There's a segment of the population, the talk show crowd, the Reform crowd, who applaud wildly when you say "fewer politicians." The work in constituency offices today—and part of it because of changed government policies, but it's always been there to a certain extent—has increased tremendously in many constituency offices. We are doing now—and some members of the government would probably be sympathetic to this as well—a lot of the work of offices such as the Family Responsibility Office. They come to us to do a lot of the work that normally we expect that the Family Responsibility Office or other offices should be undertaking.

What is disconcerting is watching the steady erosion across this country and other jurisdictions of the democratic process and nobody seeming to care. I think you judge a government, any government, anyplace based on what they do when they think no one is looking. If you can get away with it and you simply implement policies which you think are expedient for yourselves—that's more related to the way this House operates perhaps than policies across the province—if you can get away with it, of course, there's a great temptation to do it. The real people of principle will not utilize that opportunity.

If you look at most question periods now, there's nobody up in the press gallery. When I was elected to this place in 1977, along with Mr Sterling, and I'm sure Mr Conway when he was elected in 1975, we would see a full press gallery. I understand as well that they have television sets and they can watch the television sets and do other things. But there used to be considerable interest, particularly during question period, in what was going on in the House. Today we don't see that as often. Does it mean they're not doing as good a job? I would suggest there are just fewer around, again, to do it. Very often, when people leave the press gallery here, they're not replaced by someone else.

That favours government, whoever the government happens to be, not just a Conservative government. That favours a government in power when there are fewer people to look for the foibles of government, whatever government it happens to be; I'm speaking generically. We see a situation now where the news media downsize

their office at Queen's Park, eliminate people who've been here for a long period of time, who have what you call context or history in terms of this place. I really can't get into some detail. I'd like to on that.

1540

There was a rather interesting session this morning by one of our former members. Some of the members in the House today were present here. At least Mr Newman was one member of the committee, but there was Isabel Bassett, we would now call her, before a committee. That room should have been full of news media people to hear. She was good. She answered some good questions, I thought. There were some good questions asked by both opposition and government. We had very few people there today. Whether you agree—the opposition voted against the appointment and the government for it—I thought there were some good questions asked on all sides. Ms Bassett had an opportunity, albeit a shortened period of time—shorter than I would like or most members of the committee usually like to have, because there are always lots of questions on all sides that people can ask and points they could bring out. But there we were, with just a few people from the news media with any interest in the case, and this is the new chair and CEO of TVOntario.

I don't say that in a partisan sense, because those of us who are committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs, we will recall, and those who sit in that chair, are to be neutral. I don't speak of this in any partisan way except to talk about the fact that at one time this would have been a major, significant event, to have a person asked those questions and respond and then people make their judgment. That's the way democracy should work.

I keep seeing this erosion. Mr Conway made reference to a book called *Governing from the Centre*, which talks about the fact that in various jurisdictions even members of the cabinet are excluded from much of the decision-making that takes place. There is only an inner core of cabinet who really have any influence, and the unelected people. I think if you look at almost any government, that's probably true. I don't just pin it on a Conservative government. I can see it in other jurisdictions where, more and more, that is the case. Is that healthy for the democratic system? No. Just as these constant time allocation motions are not healthy.

I would prefer the government either bring the House back in early September to deal on an extensive basis with legislation and have some public hearings, and actually make some changes if they think some of the suggestions are good. Nobody is going to say that the government is stupid or ill-advised if it makes some changes to its legislation. I think governments should be commended for doing that, when they make an amendment and say, "Look, we thought we had it right, but somebody who came to a hearing or a member of one of the three parties made a suggestion that's a good suggestion," and adopt that. That would be very positive for the system.

I also see, with fewer members in the House, that committees are unable to do their work as well as they could before. It's very difficult for the government to person those committees, to make sure there are men and women on those committees, because people have other responsibilities.

In this particular piece of legislation which deals with health care, it's an extension of another piece of legislation which eroded the power of this Parliament, and that is Bill 26, the infamous bill which changed, altered or abolished, one way or the other, some 47 statutes of the Ontario Legislature in one bill. That gets to another point—and I know my whip will tell me when it's my time to sit down, or my colleague the former whip from Kingston and the Islands will help me out with that, because I'm not quite certain when I started.

I do put that lament before this Parliament. I would like to be able to get an opportunity to talk about the ophthalmologist situation, that aggravation which my colleague from Niagara South who is here, now called Erie-Lincoln, would know is a genuine problem. The ophthalmologists have taken an escalating step in saying that their offices will be closed and they'll be sending people to Hamilton at a certain timetable. That will be a great hardship for the people in our area.

I would like to be able to talk about restructuring. When we have this restructuring bill, I'm sure it's going to be rushed through before Christmas. We won't have an opportunity. There are a couple of anti-democratic—I guess that's my theme dealing with it—because we're not talking about the bill itself. I'm talking about the democratic system, watching governments put hostages in bills so that you can't vote for them, of course. There is some support. I'm not very supportive of anything that involves big cities, huge cities, but there is considerable support in some of the areas for proceeding with some kind of restructuring. I understand that. I certainly don't want to see it happening in Niagara, but that can happen.

I looked in the bill, and for all members of this Parliament this is dangerous, not just for those of us in the opposition. The cabinet is given the power to simply change any law of the province it wants. The minister gets up and says: "Don't worry. Trust us. As soon as we don't need that power any more, we'll relinquish it." That's an extremely dangerous time and circumstances for members of the House, to have a government not have to come to the Legislature to make significant changes in legislation. For all of us, no matter which party we're in, it's important that the government be accountable.

I know when you're on the government side, because I've been there, it's onerous, it's bothersome and so on, but sometimes democracy is (a) costly, (b) onerous, and (c) bothersome to people, but it's an excellent system that we've developed over the years, that people have fought and died for, that people have stood in legislatures to try to protect from time to time.

A second provision is the 75-person provision. I call that the Frank Sheehan provision, that is, where the

former member for Lincoln wants to ensure that there's one big region and he's campaigning for one big region.

So if the people in the local area, from Port Colborne and Fort Erie and Wainfleet and West Lincoln and Lincoln and St Catharines and Niagara Falls and so on, get together and say: "Here's our proposal for restructuring. We're prepared to look at our system. Here's how we think it might be improved"—it may be very minor changes, it may be significant changes, but even if they come up with a formula, if Frank Sheehan, who is leading the campaign for one big region, doesn't like it—and I know Frank well; I consider Frank to be a friend and I know he has strong views on things—he simply gets 74 other Reformers to sign the petition and that overturns what all the elected representatives in Niagara may have developed as a result of a consensus, and that's a difficult consensus. Where is the democracy in that, when you allow 75 people to overturn a decision and then hand it over to the provincial government to simply impose its stamp?

The last thing I would mention—I don't know how this fits into the democratic system but I've got a minute left and so I will utilize the chance to mention it—is that the member for Ottawa West asked the Minister of Energy a question about local hydro commissions. The kind of question he asked was, "Do you think that local municipal councils should be trying to make big bucks on selling hydro or should they provide hydro, electrical power, at a reasonable price?" The minister will correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought the minister chastized those who were inordinately trying to make a lot of money from those rates.

In our city a very close decision was made, a wrong decision in my view, to charge a huge profit on that. Lots of things should have a profit. Let me tell you, in our system a lot of things should have a profit, but providing a basic service such as electric power to people in the community should not be done at a profit; it should be done at just above cost, as it used to be by Ontario Hydro.

I relinquish my position now to whoever is the next speaker.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It's always a pleasure to follow the member for St Catharines because these days we seem to be somewhat on the same wavelength.

I have become increasingly more frustrated in this place by the lack of opportunity to speak about the real things that affect the people of this province and particularly the people of Sault Ste Marie. There are some really disturbing trends starting to unfold in this province and we're not being given the opportunity to challenge them, to speak about them, to participate in any debate whatsoever around these things that this government feels are in the best interests of everybody but, alas, are beginning to present themselves as really not that at all.

There is a terrible gap beginning to grow in this province between those who have and those who have

not, and there's a whole group of people who used to be in the middle—we used to refer to them as the middle class—in this province who are beginning to fall out of that category and are now finding themselves increasingly more in that lower end. If they're not there and they happen to be fortunate enough to be able to take advantage of some of, yes, the good economy we hear spoken of, particularly as we read the financial pages and sections of newspapers, even those people are becoming increasingly more anxious and nervous about their future and the future of their children and their communities in this province.

Even if they're able to take advantage of some of the opportunity that's out there, it's no longer that very good opportunity, position, job, that takes advantage of the training they've had, the experience they have, their love of whatever it is they do, the commitment they've made that they thought would be lifelong to a good job that they could even think very seriously of one day retiring from and passing on to somebody else, perhaps even, God forbid, their children who might follow in their footsteps.

1550

That's no longer the reality in this province. The reality in this province is that more and more people, if they're lucky, latch on to a job—and usually it's not just one job, it's two or three jobs—but these positions are contract, they're short-term, there's no benefit package, there's no pension package and there's no commitment to them as human beings, as the head of a family, as part of a family, as a member of a community, as somebody who wants to give back to society in some meaningful, positive and constructive way because of who they are, because of the commitment they made to their education, to their preparation to participate in society. There's no longer any value put in that kind of thinking. More and more people are becoming anxious and worried and concerned because they can't participate in the way they used to participate in the past. That's terrible.

We can't talk about that here, because as we come to this place now day after day, as Christmas comes upon us and as the sun sets on this session of Parliament, for us who have been elected by our constituents in different communities, it's nothing but closure motions, it's nothing but time allocation motions. It's nothing but dealing with the end of the possibility of any meaningful and real debate in this place. That's very troubling, because there are scenarios that each one of us, and even the government members if they were really living up to the responsibility they've been charged with by way of their election to bring to this House to speak at length about—because every piece of legislation that we've passed, everything we do here affects ultimately the people back home. The people who live on our street, the people who live on Lake Street in Sault Ste Marie, the people who live on the streets of St Catharines and Sudbury and Kingston, it affects every one of them in some very meaningful and fundamental ways because it orders the way we work with each other, it orders the

way we share the wealth generated by the contribution we make re our participation in the economy. It affects everything.

More and more it becomes worrisome, because this government has bought into and is in fact promoting an understanding and an approach to the way we do business that I think is very negative and destructive and in the end will come back to affect and to haunt us all.

I'll share with you just a little piece out of the Catholic Register of November 15, the editorial. Just at the very end it says: "Economic decisions are always moral decisions. Unfortunately, in Ontario morality has taken a back seat to greed and political posturing." What a terrible thing to have said about one's government and about one's approach to life in general where the common good is concerned in a jurisdiction as wonderfully rich and prosperous and exciting as Ontario.

We have other people who have said things that should cause us to sit up and take notice. We have Mr Dalton Camp, who keeps writing in his articles these days and over the last couple of years about this very phenomenon, about the fact that we're heading in the wrong direction, that we're buying into a program that's being promoted by the Reformers at the federal level. They picked it up from some of the more right-wing American governors and state governments, and it's being imposed on the people of Ontario without any real, meaningful, fulsome and wholesome debate because of the way that this place here works and the fact that every time we turn around we're confronted by a time allocation motion or a closure motion.

Mr Camp says, "Canadians Hoodwinked on Debt, Deficit for Years." Hoodwinked. He says: "We have, it seems clear, been duped and hoodwinked. When the people of Canada wake up and catch on, they'll need more than pepper spray over there in the Department of Finance to silence the dissent." I suggest that that disease has caught on in Ontario as well.

Here's David Crane, who says that this government likes to talk about the fact that we're taxed to death, that we pay too much taxes, that the money we earn by the sweat of our brow, too much of it goes to the government and they spend it on things that aren't in our best interests. Here's Mr David Crane, in the Toronto Star dated October 21, saying that Canadians aren't taxed in terms of monetary contribution but they're taxed by a lack of opportunity. That lack of opportunity, he suggests, is tied into the fact that we're not spending money on research and development. We're not putting the kind of money into communities that's needed to make sure that our colleges and universities are producing the kind of graduates we need. We're not being taxed by money taken out of our paycheck, but we're being taxed by the fact that our children, if we keep going down the road that we're going, because it gets worse and worse, will no longer be able to afford to go to college or university or participate in some of this research and development.

In this rush to diminish government, to move government out of the way, to get rid of red tape, to deregulate everything, we in the end are going to hurt ourselves and our communities and the opportunity that we were all looking forward to to take advantage of. Ontario is seen across the world as a place to come and to live and to do business. We're envied by countries from one side to the other, and it's not by happenstance or by chance. It's because of the hard work over a number of years by different stripes of government—Conservative, Liberal and New Democrat—building on what was put in place by our forefathers. Evolution of a constructive and positive nature, an appreciation for public institutions and the role that government can play in partnership, yes, with the private sector and with the volunteer sector that we have built up in this province are things that I suggest in the last four years, and if we continue down the road that we're going now, are being taken apart and destroyed in a way that we will not be able to recover. That will be very unfortunate.

There's a gap growing between the rich and the poor. Every time I pick up the business section of the newspapers these days there's another big, usually financial, corporation being touted for the historically record-high profits that it's generated. One might ask, how are they doing that? Why is that the case? Is it some new approach, is it some new development, is it some new technology or intelligence that's being put into the equation here? Alas, when you read down further into some of these articles you find that in fact the reason that some of these big corporations are making ever more profit with each year that goes by is because they're laying people off. They make increasingly high profits, produced by the people who work in those corporations working longer hours, higher productivity, giving up their coffee breaks, doing the right thing, doing the good thing, and then when the analysis is done at the end of the day and the company sees that in order to meet the insatiable appetite of the shareholder out there for even more profit next year, the only way they can do it any more now is to lay people off. People are losing their jobs.

This government is wanting to turn the public sector of this province into the same type of operation. So there's no concern here about quality of service, delivery of service, equity of delivery of service across the province, of making sure that those particularly who are most in need and most vulnerable and most marginalized actually get what they need. That's not the concern of this government. The concern of this government is, "Can we run more like a business?" We know, if we look at the example that's being set, that means fewer people working, that means less quality of service, that means less service.

Hon Mr Flaherty: There are record numbers of people working in the province.

Mr Martin: Yes, and every one of them has two or three jobs, part-time work, no benefits, no pension package, to just keep pace with what they had five and 10

years ago, Attorney General. You ought to be ashamed of myself promoting that kind of progress in this province.

Interjection.

1600

Mr Martin: Yes, let's talk about the Family Responsibility Office, let's talk about the ODSP office, let's talk about any office in this province. Let's talk about health care. We've seen again in the last week or two unfold in this province a scenario in health care that is absolutely unacceptable. If that was happening in the private sector, there would be a whole lot of heads rolling and it would start at the top. In this instance, with health care at the top in this province, it's the government. They're responsible ultimately for the delivery of that program. They're the ones that are destroying it, and at some point it will all come home to roost. Mark my words, it does. Around here what you find, if you're here long enough, is that what goes around comes around, and eventually you pay the price because the people will catch on and will act accordingly.

I just want to talk for a few minutes, in the time I have left here, about an issue that concerns my own community because it speaks to the attitude and the view that this government has about the role that government can play and the importance of government institutions to the economy of various regions in this province.

Over a long period of time, the economy in northern Ontario was very cyclical. It went up and down with the market. It was very much a resource-based economy, which it continues to be. But because it was resource-based, as the price of commodities went up, communities did well, and as the price of commodities went down, communities didn't do so well. So it was difficult for anybody in northern Ontario to think about the possibility of maybe investing real money in some very basic things like a home or a cottage. But more important, in some small business, because you never knew if two years or five years or 10 years down the road, when the economy went into the trough again, whether you were going to lose your investment.

Government came into play through the intervention of ministries like the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines—it used to be Northern Affairs. There were discussions. There was a bringing together of the community with the business sector, usually with organized labour, to say, "What can we do to even out the highs and the lows so that we could have some stability and people could have some confidence that if they invested money in a particular community, they would be able to see some return on that?" and actually consider the possibility of taking that business they've developed and put their sweat and tears into and invested in and turn it over to their kin, to their family as life went on. In doing that, they began to realize that if government spent money in education, if government spent money in health care—some of these communities built a hospital and there were some schools put up. Ministries were moved out of the heartland, places like Toronto, so that places like Wawa and Chapleau would have Ministry of Natural

Resources offices in them, that there would be some good jobs there, good jobs that were stable, that would be long-term and that would bring some revenue into the community.

You know what? Even the phenomena of unemployment insurance and social insurance came into this picture. In difficult times, some of these communities and some of the far-flung sectors of this province are finding themselves in difficult times. Small business people, particularly people who own corner stores or a grocery store or a little shoe store or perhaps a butcher shop, would find that business was down. As soon as at the end of the day, at the end of the month the social assistance cheques arrived or the unemployment insurance cheques arrived, everybody did well. Isn't it funny?

This party over here, when they look at things like EI and social assistance, all they see is this big, black hole that money goes into. You'd almost think that people were taking that and burying it in a hole in the backyard. You'd think that some of these poor people who were in between jobs, who were taking the money they were getting from EI and social assistance, were putting it in a Swiss bank account somewhere. All of that money put together created a certain stability, generated a certain confidence in the economy of those communities which made up all of northern Ontario, and we started to feel a bit more like we belonged to the larger province and that we can play a major role. We didn't feel so much any more like we were being high-graded or taken advantage of for the best that we had to offer but that all we had to offer was valued because of this.

This brings me to my point. In the mid- to late 1980s, when the New Democrats and the Liberals got together in this province to form a coalition government, there was some very important and exciting and difficult decision-making done that suggested that it might be better for the province if some of the operations that were happening in Toronto, such as some of the Ministry of Health things, some of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines—pardon?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): MTO.

Mr Martin: —MTO and some of those offices didn't need really to be in Toronto; they could be shipped out and put in other communities to stimulate those communities in terms of the economy that it created and some of the jobs that it brought and some of the opportunities that it represented.

In my own community we were all ecstatic one day when we woke up to find out that the Ontario government was going to move the lottery corporation operations up there. We were ecstatic. Some of us never thought in a million years that that kind of activity could be brought into our community. We were looking around the world for some fairy godmother to come in to invest the money to open up a new auto plant or something. Sudbury was looking for one, Timmins was looking for one, Thunder Bay was looking for one, and then all of a sudden, out of the blue, the Ontario government made a decision that they were going to move the Ontario

Lottery Corp headquarters to Sault Ste Marie. It was a wonderful day. A new building was built, people came in, moved from Toronto and began to take part in the overall life of the community. Things began to bubble. People began to see for the first time that in fact we could really diversify our economy.

We all thought that if we could make the lottery corporation a success in Sault Ste Marie then maybe, just maybe, other enterprises of a similar nature might see that you can do that kind of business that far away from the heartland and make money and be profitable, take advantage of some of the things that were to be taken advantage of up there, which are still there, such as the reasonable cost of electricity because of Great Lakes Power, our proximity to the mid-west of the US, the fact that we had a very highly motivated and educated workforce, the fact that we were half an hour from some of the best recreational opportunities in the province. The list goes on and on. It's still there.

The building was put up. The New Democrats won government in 1990, and we moved ahead and picked up from what the Liberals had started. We said, "Yes, it's going to happen." Ian Nielsen-Jones, the president at the time, took his family and said, "We're going to Sault Ste Marie." Up he came and we had a day there when we cut the ribbon and the building was opened. Honest to God, the champagne flowed and we thought we'd won the lottery. Actually, we'd only got the lottery building, but we thought we'd won the lottery.

We did in fact win the lottery, because that was our future. That was what we were going to bet the farm on, that if we could make that successful, if we could make that corporation successful in Sault Ste Marie, other like industries of an information technology nature, of a high telecommunications nature, would see Sault Ste Marie as a logical place to come and do business. Never mind the very immediate and direct and positive impact on the economy of our community that the jobs represented, that the new building represented, that the goods and services that would be purchased represented; it was symbolic in nature. It was the symbolic nature of this thing. It was the message that was sent out to the rest of the province and the country, that you could do this kind of business in Sault Ste Marie and be successful.

Do you know what? Year after year in Sault Ste Marie, as the lottery corporation established itself and began to function and operate, profits increased. The lottery corporation, noticing that its bottom line, that its profit margin was increasing, didn't turn around and say, as this government is doing and as industry is doing today, "We should lay off more people so that we can make ever more profit." They actually went out and hired some more people so that they could find out new ways of making even more money.

There is an alternative here. There is an alternative to laying people off and downsizing and restructuring in that way. You can be creative and imaginative. You can invest in new technology and you can invest in people and take the best that they have to offer and because of

that make your corporation more profitable, which is what the lottery corporation did in Sault Ste Marie. It increased its profit margin, its bottom line year over year, every year that it was in Sault Ste Marie.

But now, by stealth and in the dark of night and without any public discussion, without any conversation with the folks across the way, without any debate in this House, this government is moving to take that away from us: the Grinch that stole Christmas. This is what we're talking about here, the Grinch that stole Christmas.

1610

About six Christmases ago, after the NDP government and Bob Rae restructured Algoma Steel and St Marys Paper and the ACR, and Georgia Pacific came to Sault Ste Marie, and the government was operating like a government in our community, we were doing marvellously. I walked through the malls of Sault Ste Marie the Christmas of 1994 and, honest to God, people were singing and people were buying and the economy was doing great and everybody was happy. The black cloud that was over the community in the early 1990s because of the recession had been moved aside and we were all doing well.

A year later, when this government—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll not tolerate interjections. If you feel it necessary, remove yourself. If not, I'll do it for you.

Mr Martin: A year later, when this government began down its road of restructuring and cutting government and cutting jobs, the cloud began to come back. By the time they were finished, and as we went into the last election of 1999, we had lost somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 good, full-time, very constructive, positive jobs in our community, but that wasn't enough. That wasn't enough because by stealth and by dark of night and by decisions made by God only knows who, they're now beginning to take the lottery corporation away, our future. They weren't satisfied with the 1,500 to 2,000 jobs. Now they have to take away that facility, that corporation, that enterprise that represented for us the possibility of some real diversification of our economy, of a window into the new economy and the future.

Let me read for you. This is the Sault Star of December 4, 1999. That's last Saturday. It says here: "The headquarters of the new amalgamated Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp will be in Toronto but the lottery's operations will continue to be run from Sault Ste Marie, says OLC's director of communications."

The headquarters of the new amalgamated gaming corporation will no longer be—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me be very clear: I'm patient, and yet if I can hear someone except the speaker, then I don't think it's fair. The member for Sault Ste Marie has the floor. Therefore, I'm going to be very fair. The members for Kingston and the Islands and Whitby-Ajax, I'll not warn you again.

The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker. I really appreciate the fact that you're helping me out here because I've obviously touched a nerve and the folks across the way are getting very anxious about this because they know that I tell the truth here.

But you put this in the context of an economy—
Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'm naming the member, Mr Gerretsen.

Mr Gerretsen was escorted from the chamber.

The Deputy Speaker: I recognize the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: Thank you very much, Speaker. I just want to wrap up my few thoughts here this afternoon by suggesting that if you look at the context within which the lottery corporation has been taken away from Sault Ste Marie, which is an economy in northern Ontario that's totally and completely in the can, you begin to understand the disdain and lack of understanding or support for anything north of Steeles that moves and motivates this government.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've been listening very intently to the member's presentation. He's talking about the lottery corporation; he's talking about buildings in his riding. The motion at hand is a time allocation motion relating to Bill 23. I think he should be speaking either on the time allocation or on Bill 23, not about the lottery corporation in Sault Ste Marie.

The Deputy Speaker: One of the advantages I have here is that I'm not doing my Christmas cards—it's a very good use of time and I wish that I could be doing it. But I have been listening to the member and I don't find any fault with his debate.

Mr Martin: This government wants to close down debate. Not only that, when we do get the few minutes that we have to get up here and debate, they want to cut us down again. They feel that by interjecting in this way they will somehow intimidate us, but that's not going to work. The economy of northern Ontario is in the can, and this government is contributing to it by removing the headquarters of the lottery corporation from my community, Sault Ste Marie, and they ought to be ashamed of that.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the motion before the House and that's the motion regarding Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system. In particular, I want to take this opportunity to talk about how important it is that this legislation be passed and passed quickly.

I just want to comment. The member from Sault Ste Marie talked about lack of speaking time. He spoke along those lines. The fact of the matter is the party of which he is a member had nine members elected in 1999. That fell below official party status in this House. The rules were changed and the NDP now has official party status.

Official party status went from 12 down to eight. Because of those changes, he was able to speak today, because his party didn't actually have enough members to form an official party. I think it's important that everyone not forget that point.

Getting back to the motion at hand and Bill 23, under the proposed amendment, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care would maintain responsibility for the completion of hospital restructuring in the following 22 Ontario communities that have already received directions from the Health Services Restructuring Commission. I just want to take a moment today, as I did on Monday, to mention those 22 communities. Those communities would be Brant county, Brockville, Essex, the five counties in the Cornwall area, the GTA/905 area, Haliburton-Kawartha-Pine Ridge, Hamilton, Hastings-Prince Edward, Kent, Kingston, Lambton, London, Niagara, North Bay, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, Sault Ste Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay, Toronto, Waterloo and West Parry Sound.

The responsibility entails the minister extending timelines to assist hospitals to finish restructuring projects such as building new hospitals, opening new hospital wings and cardiac and cancer care centres, and delivering improved services to their communities. That's what Bill 23 is all about.

I've heard members opposite say that nowhere in this bill are the 22 communities mentioned. In fact, when you read directly from the bill, part III of the bill dealing with the Public Hospitals Act with respect to the application it says:

"This section applies to a hospital if before April 30, 1999,

"(a) it was issued a direction, or draft direction, under this section by the Health Services Restructuring Commission established under section 8 of the Ministry of Health Act;

"(b) it received a notice of intention, or a draft notice of intention, to issue a direction from the Health Services Restructuring Commission; or

"(c) a direction, or draft direction, requiring the establishment of the hospital was issued under this section by the Health Services Restructuring Commission."

The bill is very clear. Those 22 communities are referred to in the bill in that section. I think it's important that that be noted.

The thrust of the extension is practical, straightforward and clear. It is to provide flexibility and support to hospitals as they move forward to better meet the needs of their growing and changing populations. The proposed change would also include a requirement for review of the minister's responsibility in January 2005.

As you know, for the past four years our government has been carrying out the most ambitious reform and modernization of a provincial health care system ever undertaken in Canada. To realize that objective, when we took office in 1995 we had the determination and the vision to change the health system to serve the people of Ontario far into the next century.

We all realize that the prerequisite of a strong health care system is a strong and growing economy in which new jobs are created, quite literally on a daily basis, so for the past four years we've worked hard to cut taxes. We've cut taxes a total of 99 times. We've reduced red tape and we've done what we could to support the private sector in creating new growth and job opportunities. When I read the business sections of the newspapers, that's what I see. I see new jobs being created. In fact, since the throne speech of September 1995, some 640,000 net new jobs have been created in our province and these jobs are being created in all ridings across the province.

1620

As a result of this, our economy is now the strongest of any province in Canada. In fact our economy is stronger than any of the other G7 nations. Our goal, quite simply, is to see that it remains the strongest in order to maintain our capacity to support entities that Ontarians cherish, entities like a high-quality education system and high-quality health services.

The other day I mentioned that you need a strong economy to fund a strong health care system. Members opposite simply disputed that fact. They didn't think you needed a strong economy. I asked them, "Where is the money going to come from to pay for health care, to pay for education?" It can only come through a strong economy and that's what we've seen since 1995 under the leadership of our Premier, Mike Harris.

Health system change was essential because previous governments had put off what was so badly needed. I think they agreed it had to be done but they just didn't want to do it. For instance, over 10,000 beds had been closed in Ontario and removed from the hospital system since 1985. That's the equivalent of 35 medium-size hospitals in our province. Just think of it, the equivalent of 35 medium-size hospitals closed in our province by previous governments, yet not a single bit of effort was made to reduce the redundant overhead and administrative costs. The members opposite, when they were the government from 1985 to 1995, had an opportunity to build a better health care system, but they chose to do nothing. I guess it's easier to do nothing than to move forward with a vision.

In fact, when you look at the Liberal campaign platform of 1999, their 20/20 plan, which I think is hindsight, I quote from page 7 of the document, "We will not be bound by the ... " decisions "of the Health Services Restructuring Commission." That's what they said, "We will not be bound by the ... " decisions "of the Health Services Restructuring Commission."

I know the members opposite sometimes don't want to let the facts interfere with a good doom-and-gloom speech on health care. But in any event, Dalton McGuinty said that he would not be bound by the decisions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. He promised that he would review the decisions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission and make any changes he deemed necessary. But I ask you today, Mr

Speaker, and I ask all the members present here, how would he have been able to do that? He would have needed a piece of legislation, just like the piece of legislation, Bill 23, that's before the House today. That's if he was actually going to make the change, if he was actually going to keep his word.

As I mentioned, it's exactly the type of legislation he would have needed to bring that in. But it was our government that had the courage to start restructuring Ontario's health care system in order to ensure its survival.

It's not the first time, as we've seen. He's against this bill. We've seen in municipal restructuring that he came out in August of this year and said in a press release, "Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty supports the one-city concept for Ottawa." It went on to say, "McGuinty pledges that the Ontario Liberal Party will facilitate the introduction of single-city legislation as soon as possible."

What we've seeing here this week is that he voted against that bill. So he'll say one thing on one day and another thing on another. I guess that's part of being a Liberal. He's flip-flopping all over the place, whether it's on health care or whether it's on municipal restructuring. He's simply not consistent. Some might say he's just not up to the job.

But change, focused and clearly defined change, based on a plan and driven by a vision was badly needed and we have that vision. It's a vision of a quality integrated health services system where performance can be assessed and in which health providers are made accountable for the resources they use and the outcomes they achieve.

The first step back in 1995 when we were elected by the people of Ontario was to secure our health care budget here in Ontario while increasing spending to meet the increased service needs of a growing aging population in our province. In response to this year's federal budget, Premier Harris renewed his commitment to spend each and every dollar received back from the federal government on health care, and he's kept that word.

I just want to be very clear here that while our government has continued to pour more and more dollars into the province's health care system since forming the government in 1995, the federal government has been busy slashing transfer payments to health care services in all provinces of Canada, particularly Ontario.

In fact, Jean Chrétien and the federal Liberals cut \$2.8 billion from the health care system in Ontario. They're starting to give some of it back. They're giving some \$900 million back, and I applaud them for that, at least it's a first step, but we're not quite there. Despite the funding transfer, the federal government today contributes only 11 cents out of every dollar spent on health care in this province. So we actually made up for the cut the federal government made to health care and increased it beyond that.

Our government this year will spend \$20.6 billion on health care in our province. That by far is the highest

amount ever spent on health care in this province by any government of any political stripe, and I'm pleased to say that we're not done. During the election of June of this year, our Blueprint commitment made by Premier Mike Harris was to further increase health care spending by a guaranteed 20% over the next four years. That would mean that by the year 2003-04 there would be an extra \$4 billion each and every year into the health care system in Ontario.

We're already experiencing positive results across the province. The increased dollars are rapidly accelerating the reform of the health care system, allowing us to proceed with such priorities as hiring more nurses for our hospitals. We've allocated funding of \$480 million to support the increased role of nurses in Ontario, and we're adding some 10,000 nurses to the health care system over the next two years.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): Oh, yeah.

Mr Newman: I hear the member opposite agreeing with that. Furthermore, the number of day surgeries has increased, new drugs have been developed, there has been new technology, and we're continuing to see the expansion of dialysis units across our province. There are approximately 25 new communities that now have these services available to them that didn't have them available before. As the minister mentioned today in the House, there are 56 new, up-to-date emergency rooms being built or planned.

The work of the Health Services Restructuring Commission took place within the context of a dramatically changing health care system in our province. You may recall that the HSRC issued more than 1,200 legally binding directions to 119 of the 203 public hospital corporations in the 22 communities I mentioned across Ontario. Recently our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, announced added flexibility for Ontario hospitals as they restructure and build improved health care facilities. This was in direct response to recommendations from the Ontario Hospital Association and its members to help ensure their ability to effectively implement the HSRC directions.

The minister will maintain responsibility under section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act. Without the proposed changes, the minister's responsibility would end on March 1, 2000, and that would be unfortunate because that would be before most hospitals would have been able to complete their restructuring projects. As I noted earlier, the minister's responsibility will be reviewed in 2005.

Yet, in spite of all the fantastic things happening in health care, the opposition continues to be opposed to this bill. They are screaming "doom and gloom," as they always do. "The sky is falling." That is what they say about Conservative restructuring, but I want to let you know what people in the real world are saying.

David MacKinnon of the Ontario Hospital Association says, "The minister needs to retain the authority to modify hospital restructuring ... " Yet the Liberals are opposed to this bill.

Joseph De Mora, president and CEO of Sudbury Regional Hospital, says, "I appreciate that your government had the courage to undertake long overdue restructuring and ask that you retain these powers to complete this important initiative."

The president and CEO of the London Health Sciences Centre, Tony Dagnone, says, "We believe that as Minister of Health, you must have the authority to shape and transform health care in the face of future needs."

1630

Let me tell you what Ron Bodrug, the president and chief executive officer of the Scarborough General Hospital, says about this bill. Mr Bodrug says: "I am requesting that the Ministry of Health take the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate study, monitoring, review and necessary changes to the commission's directives and recommendations." Let me tell you, as the member for Scarborough Southwest, I support this legislation.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission finished its essential work of issuing directions last March. Hospitals in 22 communities are now putting into place the expanded and improved health care services they planned in collaboration with the commission. All they need is a little more time. If this bill passes, that's what we intend to give them.

If only the members of the opposition would realize that what they oppose today is exactly the same legislation they too would have passed had they formed the government and had they kept their word. But, no, since they continue to stall and delay, this time allocation motion is necessary.

It is time to move on. It is time to move forward and to create the best health care system in the world. I owe it to my constituents in Scarborough Southwest, and this government owes it to the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I begin this debate over Bill 23 and the time allocation motion, once again being shut down in going further on debating such a critical item as health care.

This bill affects power and bestows power to the Minister of Health, who has a terrible track record, as does her predecessor, in the whole restructuring of health services in Ontario, and especially visible in my own riding of Windsor West.

I'll start by saying exactly what David MacKinnon said as late as yesterday. This is in response to a Toronto issue that has been an issue in my home town for at least three years now, ever since hospitals were closed and emergency rooms were closed before investments were made in my community to account for those closed emergency rooms. Now that issue has reached Toronto on a repetitive basis.

I remember well over a year and a half ago sitting down with a journalist who was with a Toronto paper and saying: "You need to see what's happening in Windsor, because this is coming to Toronto. It's just a matter of time."

The pattern of health systems services and the failure to protect people and give service when it is required was set in Windsor more than two years ago. Members of this House will remember well when we advanced issue after issue. It was not a single case that we could bring forward; every single case pointed to the systematic problem that existed in how our services were being delivered.

David MacKinnon last night said this when he was asked to comment on the emergency room overcrowding, critical bypasses, emergency rooms being shut down for lack of space right across Toronto:

"Ontario hospitals used to run at 80% of bed capacity. Budgets were trimmed, and now they are operating at 95% to more than 100% capacity, said David MacKinnon, president of the Ontario Hospital Association. 'People get sick. Car crashes, ice storms, flu epidemics occur. If we build a hospital system that is so finely tuned that it works only if nothing goes wrong, we will fail.'"

David MacKinnon, I agree with you. We have failed. We have said for some time that we understood that we have critical care units right across the province that are operating at 100% capacity. They cannot have an extra bed sitting and waiting. What that means is that people out there who require the high level of care wrapped around that bed for that patient are not getting it when they need it. When you are operating at that level of capacity, you don't have any flexibility in the system to deal with the new demands that walk in that door every day, either in the front door, sent in from the doctor's office, or coming in through the emergency room.

The emergency room is just the signal of what is wrong with the whole system. We have repeated this time and time again. We have begged the province to understand that investments in the community were essential to have been made before the changes were made in the hospital system. We have said that repeatedly, and it has been to no avail.

When it was politically expedient to do so, the minister made a big, splashy announcement about emergency money being made available. This is over a year ago. Suddenly it hit the Toronto papers. Suddenly it happens in Toronto, and then it appears it's an issue. When the extremities in Ontario were already dealing with this, it comes to Toronto and it's an Ontario issue. Well, let me tell you, it has existed for some time. The system failure is there. The system failure has still to be addressed.

This Bill 23 will do nothing to fix that. This is the last minister we can trust to make wise decisions on changing how health services are going to be delivered. This is the same group that decided you could shut down emergency rooms before any more were opened.

Right here in the downtown Toronto area we're looking at the closure of other emergency rooms without the expansions being done at the remaining hospitals. How do we think we are going to cope with the sudden bulge of patients coming in through the doors? We'll tell you how: We don't deal with them at all. The patients stay in ambulances longer. They go on critical bypass

and they spend more and more time traipsing around Ontario, traipsing around the streets of downtown Toronto looking for an emergency room that will take them.

As we learned today from my colleague from Windsor-St Clair, in my own hometown, where are some of the choices being made? They're being sent to Detroit. So now the Ontario government is prepared to pay the far greater cost of sending the patients to Detroit than had we done it right the first time here. We kept saying there's still time. Our own community came forward with the Win-Win report. Our community doesn't even want to talk about the Win-Win report because it's so embarrassing to them. We were guaranteed a level of investment in our community. We never got it, but you went ahead and cut our hospital budgets anyway. Then the most natural thing in the world happened. Very responsible people on our hospital boards said, "We refuse to cut service." So there was only one thing to do and it was to run a deficit, and they selected to do so. They refused to cut the service and they ran a deficit.

Then, just before the election, it became politically expedient again for the government to suddenly come out with this money, hush money to the hospitals, hush money to the OHA, hush monies to keep them quiet so they wouldn't make too much of a stir as we got into an election year. Here came the green to keep them quiet. Well, we're past an election now and here we have the same systematic problem that we had two years ago. The hospitals are in debt and running a deficit every year. So when they came across with more monies, the hospitals did the responsible thing: They paid off the deficit, or they paid down on part of the deficit. Of course in the interim they spent more on bank charges than they ever have in their history.

In this last year we saw a record number of hospitals facing debt, 50% of our hospitals across the province in debt, and the level of annual deficits they were collecting was unbelievable, the likes of which CEOs who have been in the business for years have never seen. They tell you this in a corner, in a quiet room somewhere, because God help them, if they become public they're going to look like troublemakers, and when that happens those Conservatives come down awfully hard on them and make it worse. We're seeing the same thing happen in the education system.

Here we have a systematic failure. The Provincial Auditor exposed them a few weeks ago. If you didn't want to believe the Liberals, who have been saying this from the beginning, that you are doing this wrong, you could at minimum believe the Provincial Auditor, a non-partisan independent body whose sole job it is to look at the facts and find the facts. The fact is that not a red cent was saved in the system. The fact is that patients are not being served. What a surprise. We knew that a long time ago. The fact is that we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel here.

If you look at cancer care alone, the minister was on her feet trying to defend that a third of the cancer patients

are getting help in a timely fashion in terms of when they get radiation treatment. How can you defend that? Who were those high-paid political staffers who shoved her in the House and told her to defend that? She should have said: "That's not good enough. We failed. We will fix this."

Cancer Care Ontario was told, in southwestern Ontario: "Do not send an oncologist to appear on this program to talk about those cancer care rates. Do not send them." Why is that? Because Cancer Care Ontario is a body that is funded by the provincial government and they were fearful of having their hands slapped for standing up for what they know is right and what is in the best public interest.

The public has a right to know how intimidating the government has been for so many people across the province. "Shut up. Just do your job and say nothing." That has been the behaviour of this government. They started it in 1995 and now feel somewhat vindicated by the last election. It's back; only it's worse, because now all of the policies that they set in place in 1995 have taken the full four years to start feeling the effect. Now, in the fifth year, we are feeling the full effect of the policies this government brought in. The ministers stood in the House today and wanted to talk about years gone by and governments gone by which, at a minimum, had a consultative process that would say to communities, "What do you want in your community?" What this government gives us is Bill 23, where they're prepared to take the bat, the sledgehammer, and say: "We'll tell you what you're going to get, where health service is concerned. This is what you're going to get and that's it." Duncan Sinclair should have resigned a long time ago, because some of the first words out of his mouth as chair of the Health Services Restructuring Commission were, "If the government does not do what we are bidding in our report, I will resign." He should have resigned a long time ago.

It doesn't matter who makes the report about what a community should have to offer in health services. What is critical is who funds it and what level of funding the community receives. On that score this government gets an absolute "F," a complete failing grade.

1640

We have the most bizarre things happening in the funding of our health system today that we need to have addressed and have a proper public debate. While some hospitals are scrambling, they're on their knees in thankfulness that the government is going to allow them to raise, in some cases, \$40 million to \$50 million as their 30% portion of the capital requirement to fulfil their health services restructuring report. In my community, that is like 10 years of United Way campaigns.

Where is the money going to come from in a city like Thunder Bay? Where is it going to come from in a city like Windsor? It's coming from the one taxpayer who this same government is always talking to. That one taxpayer, in many cases, is now paying additional taxes

on his home, and is going to do so, in some cases, in five years; in some cases, in ten years.

Several months ago, it became a news item in the Globe that the Toronto General Hospital's expansion program was going to cost \$300 million in capital monies alone. To people in Windsor that is an incredible figure, and it is hard to realize. Where is that community going to get the money? That hospital board decided they're going to issue bonds. Isn't that interesting? These bonds are not being guaranteed by the government, but Mike Harris kindly sanctioned it as a novel and creative way to deal with the capital money they're going to need.

How many hospitals in Ontario have the wherewithal, live in a community and have the sophistication to issue \$300 million worth of bonds? However you do it—bonds, ops, whatever they are—you still have to pay them at some point. When you pay them you have financial costs that are incurred as a result. Who's paying the money?

Well, the story was quoted as saying: "It's not going to cost the taxpayers any money. It's not going to cost the government any money." That's exactly what they said. So I called the hospital and said to the financial officer, "Explain to me, because I don't understand, how your issuing bonds is not going to cost the government any more money. Someone has to pay out the bonds at some point, and then there's all the accrued interest. Where does that money come from?" The answer was interesting. It was, "We do not expect that our operating dollars are going to be cut in any way." I said, "So you're going to be paying out of your operating money the additional bank charges you've incurred because you've issued bonds?" She said to me: "Well, yes. But once we do the restructuring, our maintenance costs, which used to be \$10 million, are going to be cut to \$5 million. So we're saving \$5 million on maintenance costs." So now I'm thinking, "OK, so there's an expectation that the province of Ontario is going to pay \$10 million in maintenance costs every year to an organization that will only spend \$5 million of it on maintenance." Where is the public debate that would allow me, as a legislator here, to authorize an organization to spend 50% of the money it receives on what it's supposed to be getting it for? I can't agree to that.

The truth is, they are getting money us, from the government of Ontario, and they are spending it in ways we have not sanctioned. Why was it convenient for the government to agree to this, to think it was so creative as a way to finance the Toronto General Hospital? Because they could, and because a member on that hospital board happens to be named Tom Long, who is, of course, one of the biggest Tory fundraisers in the province. A key Mike Harris guy finds a very creative way to save the government of Ontario the output of the capital money that they have to give out at some point, but it's still costing us.

From a financial perspective, this may make good financial sense in how they are delaying payment of the money. But the reality is that every hospital and every

community should have the same opportunity. Should Windsor be faced with paying increased rates on our homes because we have to make up the capital money somewhere when the people serviced by that hospital in Toronto don't have that same payment? That's an inequity. That's the government of Ontario, by virtue of who is asking for what, making these kinds of decisions that satisfy some people and benefit some people, and the rest of us are swinging, the rest of us are scrambling to raise our 30% of the money.

I want to go to the community of Thunder Bay and ask them how good they feel that their city council made a decision, because they don't have choices, on how they are going to raise tens of millions of dollars required for this. Whose responsibility is it anyway that communities across Ontario today are making decisions like increasing development charges? Why? A development charge for the hospital restructuring, and that's happening here in the GTA. Why is it that even schools now are making the case that they should have additional charges on every home built because that's the cost?

I say that you pay your provincial taxes, and when you pay your provincial tax you are guaranteed these services. This government failed you on providing those services, and that has got to come home to roost. Somebody has to understand that you are being double-billed. You're being double-billed when you pay your taxes on your home. You are paying twice for services that were supposed to be covered when you paid your provincial income tax. That money is being pooled, it's being taken from you and used in other than what you thought.

We are spending more in the health service sector on consultants and high-priced people to do all of these studies because there's all this restructuring. I want to see the ledger across Ontario that says all the architects, all the consultants, all the accountants, all these new fancy names for consultants that are making an absolute fortune—because this government is forcing change when communities among themselves knew what they wanted before. Instead, the government took a baseball bat, a sledgehammer, and said, "This is what you're going to get."

Now the minister wants more powers. They're shutting down the debate on Bill 23 today because, well, she wants to have more power. She wants to be able to finish the job—for God's sake, you've killed it. There is not a hospital restructuring program anywhere in Ontario that is working as it was supposed to, because they cut the money out of the budget before they allowed the changes to take place. There is not one MPP on that side of the House, as a Conservative, who has the nerve to come to my community and walk through with professionals—you do not want to hear it from me—my health professionals, who can walk you through the ABCs of what restructuring was supposed to be and what restructuring is today.

Our Minister of Health had time, though, in the spring months to come down to Windsor looking like a damn

fool with a construction hat on, picking up a fancy pick like she was going to start the groundbreaking ceremony at my Hotel Dieu site. I stood back in the crowd and I watched this woman and thought: "How can you justify that behaviour? How can you come down here to put your mug in the newspaper and you cannot take the time to understand that we have had more people in lineups?"

The fellow from across the way spoke today and talked about this thing, and he said that their intent and their plan was to reform, modernize, the health system to serve the people. That's what he said. I wrote it down here: "Reform, modernize, to serve the people."

In my community, there have never been so many people who have not been served. Those emergency lineups are there, they are worse and they are getting longer. The doctor shortage in our community is at an all-time high, and it's getting worse. It is worse today than before we got the designation as an underserved community, if you can imagine. Do you know what? It's not even funny. We knew this was going to happen, because 10 years ago we could have predicted, based on retirements alone, how many doctors we were going to lose in my community. We knew this ten years ago.

1650

Today the government has an opportunity for some stop-gap measures to help the emergency overcrowding: Fund the nurse practitioner program—it doesn't happen; come in with physician assistance—it doesn't happen; give us some global funding for global clinics in our community—it doesn't happen. They want to suggest that all we do is criticize and complain. I have provided list after request after list after request of what, at minimum, stop-gap measures would have been for my community so that this process could work. Not one of them has been done.

Those ministry officials have kept me on the phone for an hour or more at a time, and they suddenly ask the question, "So what is it you want anyway?" They make a presumption that we just want to be political, and I have kept those staff people on the phone for half an hour, one hour giving them the list, and every single one of them is a cogent, good idea, something that would work. Not one of those things was listened to. What we have today in Ontario—last night in the city of Toronto—is completely predictable. As the experts in the field on the front lines have said, "... not a solution that is a single solution but that should have been a widespread application of a solution that we have given to the government, and the government has failed to listen."

I am not pleased to be speaking to another closure motion today, because we haven't had all that much time in the House but we've had several closure motions. The government doesn't want to hear how it has failed, and I will continue to point this out to the government always in the hope that they will finally take the suggestions we have made and apply them to the people.

Ms Martel: It's Wednesday, and that means it's time allocation or closure motion day. I looked back in terms of the times we have now had closure motions filed by

this government to shut down legitimate debate and this, if not number five, is number six. If you look at those numbers in relation to the amount of time the House has actually sat, you would see very clearly that the government just doesn't want to have people have their say. They don't want the opposition members to have input on legislation which is going through this place. They don't want a different point of view, something different from their own, to be heard in this place. They don't want to understand that a significant number of Ontarians voted for a different point of view; voted for a representative who would express a different point of view; voted, thinking that when this place sat, their representative would be able to express that different point of view. The government doesn't want to have any of that.

We have sat less this fall than we have for many months. We came back much later this fall than we should have under the calendar that we're supposed to sit, and the bulk of that time has been spent, as it is again today, with the government using its majority to force yet another closure motion through so they don't have to hear a different point of view, so they don't have to take account of a different point of view. It speaks volumes to the problems that I think we're going to continue to have in this place when this government, that has become so arrogant, just decides that it doesn't want to hear something different from what it plans to do.

There are a number of good reasons why we don't support Bill 23, and the debate hasn't been extended at all, hasn't been long at all, hasn't been stalled at all. The government just doesn't want to hear some of those very important concerns about why we don't want to support this bill and why we won't. Let me reiterate some of those today. I spoke to this bill on Monday and I want to repeat some of these concerns because I think they're very important. They certainly speak to why we should have some public hearings on this bill, why the Ontario Medical Association, for example, wanted some hearings on this bill, and this government doesn't want to comply with this.

The first concern: I've heard the parliamentary assistant several times now try and say that the changes to the Public Hospitals Act, which are in part III of this bill, only have to do with the minister assuming responsibility for the directions that the Health Services Restructuring Commission has already applied. That's all it has to do here. There won't be any unilateral arbitrary power of the minister foisted on any other community. There won't be under this section the possibility that the government is going to close a hospital somewhere else without public consultation, restructure a hospital somewhere without public consultation, take over the records and the running of a hospital board without any consultation. That's not going to happen. This bill and the changes in part III only have to do with the minister maintaining what was already set down in the direction by the HSRC.

If only that were true. I'll give you the first example where that's not the case and why what the parliamentary

assistant has said is just not true. Look at the case of Montfort Hospital. The court in the last number of weeks struck down the directions of the commission with respect to Montfort Hospital. They were right to do so. It was ridiculous that the only francophone hospital in this province was essentially shut down by the commission. It was the only institution where health professionals could be trained in French and then apply that expertise to other communities that have francophones, like my own. It was ridiculous that the commission essentially shut that teaching hospital down.

The court has made it clear. They have struck down the directions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. They said that the commission should go back and try again. But we know that the commission acts only in an advisory role now, so who will make the decision on Montfort and who will provide new direction on Montfort? It's very clear that what happened in the past cannot continue. It's very clear that those directions cannot marginally be changed and then come back in a slightly different form and be acceptable; they will not. There has to be a major change with respect to Montfort, and this government will be responsible for that, this minister will be responsible for that. If she does her role properly, she will protect francophones for a change, which should have been done in the first instance. There has to be a change with respect to Montfort. It has to come from the minister.

Saying that this bill and this section only allow for the recommendations that were in place to proceed is absolutely untrue. This government, as a result of what has happened at Montfort and the court decision, now has to have a primary role and a primary responsibility and probably will set the direction. I think that this legislation sets the context for that to happen.

Clearly, if the minister can use this legislation, because she's going to have to, to set a new direction for Montfort, she can then use this legislation to set the direction for other hospitals, to look at closures in other hospitals, to look at restructurings in other hospitals, to order those to occur.

If you use that one example only, Montfort, it's clear that this isn't just about applying the recommendations. It's about giving the minister unilateral powers to set directions about what hospitals do: closures, restructurings, seizures of records, replacing hospital boards, many of those same functions of the commission that were in place which will now be transferred to her. We found those responsibilities, those powers under Bill 26 to be reprehensible then; if you give them to the minister, we find them reprehensible now. No body, no minister should have that kind of control. There should be no process that continues which does not allow for public input to take place with respect to hospitals and health care services in Ontario communities.

The second issue: The minister is already in the process of changing the directions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. I used the case of North Bay on Monday and I'll use it again. As I read what the

minister has done with respect to North Bay and the restructuring report that was issued for that community in March 1999, clearly she is already intent on changing those directions; clearly she has given a mandate at the local level to change those directions. I resent that.

I don't blame the workers at the psychiatric hospital in North Bay, for example, who want to protect their jobs, who want to make sure that their clients get the best possible health care. I don't blame them for doing that. What I resent is what I see to be blatant partisan political manipulation of directions that were already established by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. If it can happen in one community, and of course it happens to be the Premier's riding, then why shouldn't my community be able to have the directions changed with respect to the closures of two of our three hospitals? Why shouldn't Thunder Bay have the opportunity to have its directions changed as well, or any number of the other communities that have had to follow those directions?

1700

Let me give you the North Bay example clearly so you can see what my concern is, so you can understand that when the parliamentary assistant gets up and says, "Oh, this bill is only about implementing what's already in place," I don't believe him, because that's not what's happening.

On May 4, the Minister of Health wrote to a Mr Peter Birnie of North Bay to thank him for agreeing to become the chair of the Northeastern Ontario Mental Health Implementation Task Force. It's clear in that letter that the minister is trying to defy—defy—the directions that were set in North Bay in two areas, first with respect to the mandate of the task force itself.

You see, the Health Services Restructuring Commission, in its March 1999 report in North Bay, made it very clear what the mandate of this task force would be. It laid out that mandate in the directions themselves. It set our four areas in which that committee would have a role. Those responsibilities included: to develop a reinvestment strategy in the community to deal with the community-based sector; to look at patient assessment; to look at the mix of in-patient and outpatient mental health beds; and to recommend how to reallocate some of that funding. Their role was clearly defined by the Health Services Restructuring Commission in the directions.

Second, the directions that were laid out in the March 1999 report of the Health Services Restructuring Commission in North Bay made it very clear—absolutely clear—how many beds would be allocated and where those beds would be sited. I quote right from the report:

"The HSRC will advise the Minister of Health to site 61 long-term mental health and 26 forensic beds at the site of the new North Bay General Hospital, with 31 long-term mental health beds and 12 child and adolescent beds to be sited at the Sudbury Algoma Hospital site." Very clear: how many beds; the composition of them; where they would be located between the two communities.

Yet in the May 4 letter to Mr Peter Birnie of North Bay, the minister says very clearly that the Northeastern Ontario Health Implementation Task Force "will also make recommendations"—make recommendations—"pertaining to the Northeast Mental Health Centre in terms of the siting of the system, siting of the beds, and the related impact on physician services," clearly contrary to the mandate that the HSRC had already set out for the task force, clearly contrary to the direction already given with respect to the number of beds and the siting of them.

Why is it that the minister feels she can do an end run on the Health Services Restructuring Commission's directions in North Bay, do something different, but every other community that's been affected by that commission has to live with the directions that were already applied? Why is it? I think it only has to do with the fact of whose riding it is, and I find that regrettable because my community, despite many things that many people did not like about the directions, despite some of the concerns that I continue to have about whether or not we have the appropriate number of operating rooms or the appropriate number of acute care beds, has had to live with the directions that were set down. It's a very bad process. It smacks totally of partisan politics to allow something different to happen in the Premier's community, something different to happen in the Premier's riding.

When the parliamentary assistant tries to tell this House that the changes to the Public Hospitals Act, part III under this bill, have only to do with implementing what was already in place, I don't believe him because that's not the case. We already have the minister way out on a limb, as it seems clear to me, trying to change, do an end run, do something different in North Bay than what was recommended by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. That's a bad process. That's a bad way to do business. It certainly sends a signal to all the rest of us who've had to live with the directions that we were given.

When I look at the situation that is occurring in hospitals, clearly I have another concern with respect to the restructuring. The parliamentary assistant has said again this is only about implementing the directions set down by the Health Services Restructuring Commission. So my question would be, who then will end up paying for all of those increased capital costs for hospital restructuring that the auditor notes in his recent report of November 1999?

The auditor took a look at the costs associated with the capital construction related to restructuring, the capital construction related to the direction set out by the commission, and he said, "Based on hospital estimates, the capital costs for hospital restructuring would increase to approximately \$3.9 billion from the \$2.1 billion originally estimated by the HSRC"—up to \$3.9 billion from \$2.1 billion. If this is only about the minister just assuming the directions that were already set, who's going to pay for those increased capital costs in all of those communities that have been forced to restructure?

I look at my own community. It was interesting that the parliamentary assistant was quick to quote Joe De Mora from the regional hospital about how he is supportive of this bill. I wondered why the parliamentary assistant didn't take the time to quote the financial officer from Sudbury Regional Hospital when he talked about the deficit that we are incurring in our community at the regional hospital as a result of the restructuring. Why didn't the parliamentary assistant talk about that and quote that in the House today? The chief financial has said:

"Sudbury Regional Hospital has been particularly hard hit because its restructuring project is further ahead and more costly than other hospitals," said Dave Bronicheski, chief financial officer. "We have a situation that is somewhat unique due to our restructuring."

He made it clear that the province is only recognizing a portion of those costs and that we have a deficit from last year and we have a deficit projected for this year. That deficit this year is going to be in the order of \$8 million. He said: "The hospital will also need further financial help from the province. Eventually, if there are no additional funds, we will have to look at reducing service levels."

Finally, a quote again: "We'll be in a situation where we'll be out of cash by next April, April 2000, and we'll be forced to look at reducing services or borrowing." Now why didn't the parliamentary assistant quote that from the Sudbury Regional Hospital?

That is a financial deficit that is a net effect of the restructuring commission being completely out of whack with respect to its costs. But more important, there's an \$8-million deficit in my community. There's a deficit in Pembroke; we heard the member speak to that earlier this week. There's a deficit in Thunder Bay. Who is going to pay for all of those increased costs that are so out of whack now and out of line with what the commission first anticipated those costs to be? What's going to be the share that my community now has to fundraise in order to deal with the restructuring that was imposed on us by the commission? What are the costs that so many other communities are going to have to fundraise in order to follow the directions that have been imposed on them by the Health Services Restructuring Commission?

Yes, I do have many concerns. I'm not going to be supporting this bill and I don't agree that the debate should be shut down today, because it's clear that the government doesn't want to hear the concerns that I have to raise and the concerns that other members in the opposition have to raise, and those concerns really are about the unilateral, arbitrary power that will be extended to the minister via this legislation; the concern that it's not going to be limited merely to the 22 communities that have had restructuring of hospitals imposed on them, that it's much deeper and broader than that and can be used in other communities; the concern that the legislation doesn't say anything with respect to the deficits that my community and so many others will now have to fund

and who's going to pay for it and how it's going to be dealt with. I'm opposed to this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and address the issue before the House, which is debate on Bill 23, a time allocation motion. I know, for the record, that this particular legislation being brought forward by the government has been discussed at some length. I've actually listened and read a number of the comments this afternoon, and I want to compliment the member for Scarborough Southwest, the parliamentary assistant to the minister, for the very informed contribution to the debate. Also, he has shared with me, as I'm sure all of the members on both sides of the House had the opportunity to understand, what's behind the restructuring of health care.

As you know, I like to drive the general, broader message from the province down into my constituency of Durham, which is not absolved from the changes that are occurring on all fronts, nor was it absolved from the change that occurred under the previous government, where entire floors of local hospitals were closed. So I drive down the message of why this government took the initiative of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and I mean that respectfully.

1710

I was quite impressed; the member for Beaches-East York was the Minister of Health of the day when they had the opening of a new wing of the Bowmanville Memorial Hospital. I was very pleased to attend, representing the mayor. At that time I was a regional counselor, so I was very happy to be there. With all respect, Ms Lankin was very well received in the community.

The community, as you know, had worked very hard and raised most of the funding locally. The whole issue then was that there really weren't enough operating funds. I don't hold that to you, Mr Speaker, or to anyone else. I know the government of the day had a huge revenue problem. The municipalities were all part of that as well. I remember Floyd Laughren, as treasurer of the province, was wrestling with restructuring financial arrangements with municipalities, and I know you were trying to make the best of a bad situation. To give the viewer the context, and for the record, I could look beyond that, when I think Elinor Caplan was Minister of Health, and their issues with dealing with some slippage in revenue and over-expenditures.

The demands on health care are not new. I know the government of that day wrestled with trying to control expenditures in health care. Ultimately what happened was that the transfer payments or global budgets were somewhat contained or capped. What happened—I saw it and I'm sure all of us as members involved in our communities would have seen it—was that they were capped. There were increases in various operating costs, and they laid off front-line workers. To do that, because of the regulations, they had to close beds. In fact, 10,000 or 12,000 beds were closed before 1995, not by any

vicious or intentional design. It was a case that the demands on health care are such that they exceed the ability to sustain the system.

If I go back further, Bob Rae—in respect to him in the debate as well—was the first Premier, I think, to really sound the alarm that the federal health and social services transfer payments had run into a crisis point. He was the first one to come on the record in the press and say that the transfer payments from our federal partners in Ottawa had reached an alarmingly critical point. His claim was that he was losing revenue from the onset of the recession, which was affected Ontario very badly, and he was losing transfer payments from the federal Liberal government, which was trying to balance its books on the backs of people.

At the time the health care system was set up, 50 cents of every dollar was supposed to come from federal transfer payments and 50 cents from provincial revenue. I can tell you that when we became government, the share was about 8 cents from the federal government and 92 cents from the province of Ontario. We have taken that investment of 8 cents and moved our share up to a greater portion, and we've also urged the federal government to move their share up 11 cents on the dollar.

Today, in our publicly funded health care system, the federal government, which entered into an agreement of 50 cents on every dollar, is only contributing 11 cents on every dollar, clearly putting all the provinces, as we see on the nightly news, into shock and chaos. I blame, probably, Allan Rock and Jean Chrétien and, to some extent, Paul Martin.

That does not end the story. Our minister stands in the House every day. Minister Witmer is respectable and hard-working, the nicest person I've had the privilege to work with, and I know she cares and is doing the very best. In fact, she has won the support of all of cabinet. When you look at our election document, we know that health care is a huge demand—the technology and the aging demographic issues. They committed 20% additional funding to health care. In 1995 we committed to restructure health care. I know it was on the agenda of the other parties as well, but we've actually put it there as a priority. The first thing we did was stop this whole chaos of just reducing global budget transfers to hospitals. We put in place the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

That brings me only to the starting point on the issue. Mr Newman has covered relentlessly, I might say in some detail—in fact, it might be argued too much detail sometimes, but Mr Newman is very technical support. He's the PA to the minister and he has the duty to communicate the information.

I'll take a slightly different tack. The Health Services Restructuring Commission—and I know a couple of the members, not from any influence that I may have. I'm just a very small person in my community, but I do know them to be leaders in Ontario. Mark Rochon of course is with the Heart Institute in Ottawa, very well respected. Dr Sinclair was the head of the medical school faculty at

Queen's University. They had no reason to take on this burden of restructuring, but it's an enormous task of changing the delivery of health care in Ontario.

It takes great courage and great leadership, and I thank our Premier for that courage, our Minister of Health, and indeed all of cabinet and caucus for standing up and trying to turn the vessel before it collides. That's exactly what we're doing. What we promised was to drive health care closer to the patient. It takes time. Those significant adjustments in direction take time. There are competing stakeholders in that group, as you would know. There are the home supports, community care providers, the hospitals, the small community ones like mine in North Durham. Even before we came in, the Uxbridge and Port Perry hospitals took it on themselves to merge, and I commend those operating people at the time for taking that initiative because they knew they were spending too much on the administrative side and too little on the patient side. The nurses knew it. They told us. This was even before I was elected that these discussions were ongoing, and they did that themselves.

But we as a government took the decisive measure to put in place an arm's-length Health Services Restructuring Commission. Don Thornton was from my riding. I think he was an MIT graduate. He was a vice-president of the corporation at General Motors. That was the last thing he needed in the early years of his retirement, to give back to his community his leadership and his skills, to listen and analyze the input into restructuring the delivery of health care.

There will be those who argue that the commission was in place and there are those who say in criticism that we didn't put the home supports in place early enough, but what we said and what we were doing was trying to redirect the resources and contain the whole envelope of \$17.4 billion. By the way, the Liberals promised \$17 billion. Ours was escalating; it was around \$18.4 billion during the early stages of restructuring. We'd increased it a billion, but what we were doing was redirecting spending into the community for more community supports. That's patients being discharged earlier having the supports in their home.

During that whole process, they'd listened and reviewed the technical documents, as well as community input and other stakeholders. I can only comment on my riding, because it is one of the 22 communities that are listed under Bill 23. I want to go through in some detail because that's what's left here. Of course all sides will have quotes that support, but I want to listen to the non-elected leaders in our community who came in. This is what they say; in fact, I'm reading from Brian Lemon, who is the CEO for Lakeridge Health Corp, which is the new amalgamated board of all the hospitals serving Durham except for the Ajax-Pickering hospital. That is under the Rouge Valley group, which is a little issue too. They redefined the regional boundaries, which is a bit of a conundrum.

Here's what Brian Lemon said: "I'm concerned that without your ability to make revisions to these legally

binding directions, we may not be able to take advantage of any opportunities to make revisions that would further enhance and improve Ontario's health system."

1720

Brian Lemon is also an administrator who has operated—I met him after his appointment and selection by the board. There was absolutely no political interference, and it should not be that way as well. The board is a very competent board in Durham. He had been working at a number of hospitals in Sudbury; he'd been involved in that. He had also been involved in the Alberta Children's Hospital reorganization. He was a person who was familiar with the need to reorganize and restructure.

I commend him. He has tried to work with all the very complex stakeholders in the riding, and not just the stakeholders. For those watching, the volunteer boards are part of the equation, and obviously we've got front-line nurses and their associations and representatives, and we've got doctors and their representatives as well. For the record, I want to say that they need this legislation to allow them to further work towards a successful implementation plan. That's probably the best way to say that Bill 23 provides for 22 communities, as listed here by Mr Newman on a number of occasions.

I want to share my time so I've got to get this on the record.

For the record, I would say that the Health Services Restructuring Commission in Durham—Brian Lemon wasn't there at the time but he has now taken the North Durham, Whitby, Bowmanville and Oshawa sites and merged them into one board. That's an accomplishment. We had a whole bunch of presidents and staff and support staff and, as I said before, North Durham had already done it. Uxbridge and Port Perry had merged under one new director, Guy Kirvan.

I want to put their names on here because these people, to some extent voluntarily, have given of their time to make their communities and their health care system a better place. That would be Brian Lemon. David Hume was the director at the time or the president at the time. He retired as part of this organizational change. There is the current chair, Judith Spring, as well as the site vice-president. These are the operational people. Operating officers is what they are called. At Bowmanville Memorial Hospital, where some of my children were born, is Chris Kooy, a nurse in her professional background. And I want to thank Anna Strike, who is a volunteer for the board of directors of the foundation, for all the money they raise for the ongoing needs of equipment. We have Guy Kirvan, who is the operating officer under Lakeridge, North Durham, and the fundraising foundation is Kent Farndale, a tireless volunteer in the community on a number of fronts.

This whole restructuring: Well, they said they were going to look at the role of the Whitby site, but I think, more important, the people of Durham—when I was at General Motors, they had huge fundraising employee contributions to support emergency expanded services. As well, Durham was looking for cancer treatment, I

believe. They were also looking for expanded dialysis. They were also looking for MRI.

I can put on the record today that all of those things have come true, thanks to our Premier and our Minister of Health. We have MRI. This Friday I'll be attending the groundbreaking ceremony on the new emergency unit, with the attendant acute care unit that goes with it. So it's well underway. This was all part of the restructuring commission's recommendations: emergency, cancer treatment, expanded acute care facilities. Also, there is long-term care beyond the hospital so they can move patients through the system into being in the right place at the right time with the right resources. That's really part of a long plan.

I would put to you, this is the difficulty the minister has: You can't press a button and change the direction of a very complex, highly technical, knowledge-based system, and the stakeholders are somewhat nervous in the climate of change. So in Durham, I'm confident that the volunteer board and the professionals will work together.

I want to put on the record that I meet regularly with the board, as well as the local front-line people. Dr Cohoon is the chief of staff and general surgeon at Lakeridge North—that's North Durham—a wonderful person, very highly respected. Dr Ben Fuller is another at the Bowmanville site, and Robin Davies at the Oshawa site for Lakeridge. I want to commend them on the record for doing a spectacular job of working through difficult changes.

It isn't going to get better immediately. I wish I could say it. But when they pressed the button here to start the construction on emergency, guess what? Construction is difficult in hospitals. They're going to have to decant services like dialysis to other sites, which is a problem. There are still problems, and I hear them. I want to confirm to my constituents that I'm listening.

Dr Hryciyshyn is a cardiologist. I met with her last Friday to address some of the issues and concerns she had, which I'll be making the minister as well as the board aware of. Dr Hepburn, on pediatrics, is quite concerned about the ability to deliver complex pediatric services in Durham. As an elected person, I must see that happen.

I am looking for a little bit of support from the member for Northumberland to see if he is willing to fill in and it seems he is somewhat reluctant. I need a signal from you.

For the record, though, I think I've pretty well captured all I'm capable of in terms of speaking for the people of Durham.

In summary, I just want to say that there is another little sidebar to this. I listened while I was preparing some of the very extensive notes I have. I was in the caucus room and I was watching a couple of the previous members speaking.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I'll be summing up. Thank you, Mr Galt—or Dr Galt, pardon me.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and the member for St Catharines have been talking about the issue of decorum. That was raised with the Speaker today. I want to refer to Hansard of December 6. There are a few statements in there that need to be read into the record of who is adding fuel to the fire. It's fine to accuse the government of being responsible for everything, but decorum in this House is the responsibility of every elected member, sitting on either side of the House, old or new. Respectfully, Mr Speaker, if I've contributed in any way to the negative climate that's been referred to in this House, I think the record for those two members should be read.

I should say today, for the record, as part of this complete debate, that the member for Windsor West—I'm just repeating here—accused our minister of being a "damn fool" at the opening of a hospital in Windsor. That's the language that's being used, "to get her mug in the paper." It's the tone and the absolute discredit to all the members to accept that as acceptable language and dialogue in this House.

For the record, Mr Newman, the parliamentary assistant and member for Scarborough Southwest, was at the opening of the Windsor Regional Hospital emergency department. Because it was good news, neither the member for Windsor West nor the member for Windsor-St Clair was there, but the member for Essex was, because he realized that the minister is trying to do the right thing with the direction of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

Despite the record, and speaking to the bill, I can tell you that I will be supporting it. I've heard from the administrators. I've heard from the hospital front-line nurses and doctors. This is required. This government has the courage to do it, and with that, I quite willingly give up the floor to the member for Northumberland.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is with some pleasure that I take part in this debate today because it is a chance to remind the people of Ontario what this government and the members of this government really stand for, because this bill today encapsulates in a fairly short form the precise nature of the biggest folly of the Harris government, and that is, the comic book revolution has always had a very limited outlook in terms of how to actually do any of the things it promises.

The attitude and the actions towards hospitals, I am certain, will be the legacy of this government for many years to come. Why? Because of a compliant backbench that would not stare in the face of the people who run the Premier's office and say, "You can't have all the power to walk into our communities and tell our communities what hospitals they can have, what services they can have, what nurses they have to fire, what kinds of things they get to have in their communities."

Services that were built up in those communities for 50 years were ripped out of them by a Conservative government. The irony for people schooled in political

thought in this country is that a Conservative government would charge up a central commission and a minister with untrammelled power to reach into communities and create devastation. What we have seen here in the last five years is something we haven't seen outside of the Soviet politburo, with unelected, unanswerable, unaccountable people sent into communities to run roughshod over local boards, over local community efforts.

1730

For years and years people literally put their sweat and their effort into building up local hospital services, from times when this province was not prosperous, when the people in this province had to be thankful to have health care, when people had to work hard and sacrifice. With one fell swoop this unholy alliance of health technocrats and neo-conservatives opposite has swept aside real community-developed health care.

This bill before us today seeks to confirm the worst of those powers. It is a short bill. It talks in section 3 about giving this minister the power to continue to make any manner of decisions about hospitals that she sees fit without having to answer to this Legislature, without having to answer to any of the people living in the communities of the members opposite, so members opposite have all stuck their heads down and said: "We don't mind. Come right back into our communities and create some more havoc." Because havoc it is.

There is probably no better documented example of the government's thorough incompetence. We now have the auditor's report, which says to these so-called fiscal conservatives, these people who would like to be known for thrift, that they're the worst wastrels we've seen in government for years: \$2 billion over cost, a doubling at least of the implications, not of the ravages of time, of buildings falling down, of the need to make things and make them better—not that, but of the decisions of this commission and the decisions of this minister to replace facilities and then not to have the actual honesty to say what they really cost. So we're paying \$4 billion to deal with the mistakes of this government, \$2 billion additional to what they said. The penultimate irony is at the end of the day future generations will pay those \$2 billion and they'll end up with fewer health care facilities than they need. What has this really been all about? It has been about starving the system, because despite what many of the members opposite have said, the facts are the facts. This government cut the funding to health care, it cut the funding to hospitals. You can verify that year by year, how less money was provided. Instead the figures were padded with phony expenses.

For example, \$400 million was wasted firing nurses in various communities across the province, from this unelected commission reaching in and the minister deciding from some remote Toronto location what's good for places like Wingham and Hamilton and Ottawa—just deciding all by itself what would happen. Instead, we find that we have to pay \$400 million in severance packages to nurses who this government claims, but have yet to start any action on, they're going to rehire.

Which do we believe, that the government is telling the truth that it's going to rehire those nurses, or are they really still on the same cutting agenda? Because the bill today is about giving the minister the continued power from the year 2000 in perpetuity. It mentions 2005 as the time when this unholy power goes away, but instead this power continues. It's only the minister himself or herself who will decide whether they want to keep the power. This is the branding of the Mike Harris government, a government that started off with a comic book revolution and never had the guts, the respect, the understanding for the people of Ontario to admit when they had made mistakes. Here today the sheep of the backbench of the Conservative caucus are giving back a seal of approval to every decision that this minister and the two other health ministers who have fallen by the wayside have made to ruin communities' health care, for example to double the length of time waiting for cancer treatment.

We stand in this House talking about something abstract called a closure order from this government, which has not even a minimal respect for democracy; it brings this bill forward to try and pass it in one week. That's how compliant the Conservative members of this government are. They'll actually allow only one week's debate on this bill, which gives the Minister of Health power to continue to reach into their communities and do whatever they want.

We had the auditor tell us this government was incompetent on capital costs. We had the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce tell us they were bankrupting hospitals. We had the Ivey school of business examine the changes put forward by this government using these powers and say they were exactly the opposite of what was required for that system, that instead this government has induced chaos.

When this government started its little central government experiment, we had fewer beds per person than the government of Alberta did when it was finished. Now we're headed into the territory of cutting hospital beds. Believe me, the government won't admit it. Even members who are affected in their own communities, who are losing the 3,000 chronic care beds, for example, that are being ripped out of communities still, won't admit either that this government is still cutting and taking beds away.

The legislation before us today for the closure motion is actually going to continue that. We're going to end up with the continued thing that we had in the past where small towns like Grimsby were terrorized. It was only through extreme pressure—6,000 people coming out to a meeting—that this government was made to back off only slightly. This means that the hospital in Grimsby is not safe. This means that small hospitals all over the province are not safe, because they're covered by these powers.

We have people here today, sitting glued to their seats, who should at least be demanding: "Let's have a review of what happened. Let's see what occurred in the last five years. Let's look at better ways to run the health care

system." For example, having an independent chief medical officer or chief officer of health to be able to go into communities and be able to act in favour of quality. We have so-called efficiencies being undertaken by this government, but nobody looking after the patients.

Today we stand in this House and there are 14 times as many people being put in hallways, stuck in emergency rooms, not being given hospital care, as there were in 1995. That doesn't even cause this government to pause. We had the spectacle today of a minister not willing to take any responsibility for a clear signal that the basics of health care are unavailable to hundreds and thousands of Ontario citizens. Is there even a single member opposite who will acknowledge that? Not one.

We have today the possibility. Each member here can stand in their place. Each member here knows in their gut it's wrong to have this kind of power centralized over the hospital system. We've lost the confidence of the doctors and the nurses. We no longer have a system we can fully be proud of. There are probably at least some people opposite who would like to see a real health care system. Instead, they are supporting the abuse and the neglect made possible by this. This from a government who didn't even have the self-respect to spend the money the federal government sent them last year.

Mr Galt: I appreciate the fact that the member from Durham did leave a few minutes for me to make a few comments. The first comment that I would like to make: I listened very intently at the beginning of this debate when the member from St Catharines was talking about some of the issues relating to time allocation and some of the actions in this House. He was talking about shutting off debate and all concerned. I asked that member: How long? What is he really saying? What is reasonable for length of debate? In a few moments I'll bring some of the times various governments have had for debate.

He talked about manners in this House, about degenerating into some shouting matches. I would suggest, as it has already been suggested to the Speaker of the House, that the record be reviewed. I think we just had an example in here a few minutes ago of calling names. The member from Parkdale-High Park was referring to the government as Communist. That's totally unnecessary. It's not the appropriate kind of language to be used in this House. Also, recently I remember the member from Sault Ste Marie referring to us as Stalinists. I'm sure that you, Mr Speaker, would not want to use that kind of language in this House, most unfortunate verbiage to be using here. It's no wonder we degenerate into shouting matches when the Liberals and the NDP are using those kinds of words.

The member from St Catharines also talked about length of time and consultation and that kind of thing. I've got a lot of figures. I know they're kind of boring, but I would like to share them for the record, relating to the 36th Parliament, the NDP 35th and the Liberal 34th.

The Conservatives: In our term we sat for 431 days, passed 114 bills, which averaged out at 0.26 bills per day. The NDP sat for only 385 days, compared to the 431, and

they passed 163 bills, 0.42 bills per day, significantly more, almost half a bill a day that they sat. The Liberals, on the other hand, being here under three years, only sat for 297 days. They decided to go out for an election. They passed 183 bills or 0.62 bills per day. That's well over half a bill per day. I could draw that comparison based on three years. Of course, the Liberals end up with the same and it works out the PCs in the first three years passed 0.25 bills per day while the NDP in their first years passed 0.51 bills, or slightly over half a bill per day.

1740

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): So who's ramming through the bills?

Mr Galt: That's absolutely right. As the member from Guelph-Wellington says, who's ramming through the bills?

Let's move on to see the length of time spent and the actual hours. In the first session passing second reading, we spent four hours and 50 minutes per bill on second reading. How much did the NDP spend in their turn? They spent one hour and 28 minutes per bill on second reading. That's less than a third of what the PCs were spending. What did the Liberals spend? They spent one hour and eight minutes. Now as you move into the second session, the Conservatives moved up to six hours and 10 minutes. What did the NDP do? They doubled. They're up at three hours and 55 minutes, the Liberals languishing behind at one hour and 38 minutes.

Mrs Elliott: Didn't want to talk in public.

Mr Galt: Didn't want to talk in public, didn't want to debate apparently. Then as you move into third reading, I think this is pretty exciting, Mr Speaker. Just hold on to your throne there. The PCs in the first session had two hours and 10 minutes per third reading passage; the NDP had slightly under an hour, 48 minutes; and—this is the real cruncher—the Liberals had seven minutes per third reading for each of the bills. Now they doubled that in the second session that they were here, up to 15 minutes per third reading.

The member from St Catharines was talking about consultation. Let me tell you about the kind of consultation outside of Toronto that our government had. We had a total of almost 800 hours—798 hours and 14 minutes—of consultation outside. What did the NDP have? They had 645 hours. What did the Liberals have? They had 349 hours and 45 minutes.

Now right in his backyard, the area around St Catharines—Niagara, into the Niagara area, the PC government had 77 hours and 45 minutes. The NDP had 48 hours and 40 minutes and what did the Liberals have? When he was in government, Minister of Environment, they had 28 hours and seven minutes. That's all they spent. That is all they spent there in the Niagara Peninsula, right in his backyard, where I would have thought he would want to have had a lot of air time as he likes here in the House.

He also complained about press coverage, why they're not here. I can understand why they're not here. It's the quality of questions that's coming from the other side of

the House. It's tough to sit here as government and not laugh when you listen to some of these questions that come across. Obviously, I guess, maybe the press is pleased with what the government is doing and quite content and not really too interested in the kind of Mickey Mouse questions that we get.

He also talked about it being less democratic. Before this government it was unheard of to go out on the road and consult before bringing in a bill. Our government has been on the road many times consulting. One was on the auto insurance bill that came in. The Liberals tried to change it; the NDP tried to change it. In both cases it was a real mess afterwards. We went out, consulted, brought in a bill, and it's working extremely well.

We went out on the road for the right-to-farm legislation prior to it coming in, and there were quite a few other bills we were on the road with. I'm pleased to say that I'm soon going to be out consulting on the concern with big farms and nutrient management and some of those areas.

He also talked about a busy House agenda. I don't know what he's here for. I'm here to work. I don't want to be running back and forth to my riding and then up here for just a day. I'm prepared to sit in the evenings and do a full day's work when I'm here. Then when I'm in the riding I can be with my constituents and work with them. I just think it's great when we're here and have evening sittings and can get some work done.

Just to address the time allocation motion in the remaining three minutes, some of the things that I'm hearing from small business and their concerns about government, what they're saying is government moves too slowly. "Get on and get things done," whether it's time allocation or whatever. Make the decisions and get on with it. Bring back some accountability to government."

That is what this government has been about: accountability. These people in small business—that's where 80% of the new jobs are being created, the over 600,000 net new jobs created since we took office, a significant drop in unemployment, both general unemployment and youth unemployment in the month of November. But those are the kinds of things they want. They want decisions made and they want to see that we get on with things.

There is a responsibility that government has and that's to lead. I think the opposition sometimes forgets that because their only role is to oppose, which they don't seem to be doing very well. If we were to leave these decisions as to how long we would debate these various issues, the Liberals would literally talk forever, and when it comes to decisions that the NDP make, of course they would make the wrong ones.

I enjoy one of the NDP speakers here. He regularly speaks for a full hour, very entertaining, but when he's finished, I haven't the slightest idea of what he was talking about. There's no content. That's the kind of debate we end up with in this House.

I think when we have three days of debate on a bill and then a debate on the time allocation motion and then we're moving out to hearings with committees—I just indicated the kind of time we spend at those committees and the hours with the public—then we come back for third reading, prior to any bill coming into the House there have been all kinds of extensive consultations.

We heard earlier some of the quotes, and I have a whole list of quotes of CEOs of hospitals who are asking us to get on with this particular bill, which is exactly what we're doing. Some of that consultation comes in the form of questions from the opposition and that helps to form some of the bills. But I can tell you that in the case of Bill 23, the public out there, the CEOs of hospitals, are asking us to get on with this. Certainly, it's time that we did in this particular case.

I made reference the other day to the phenomenal evolution of health care, where we've come in the last 100 years, from the discovery of antibiotics, the discovery of Aspirin, through to things like MRI units, CAT scans, growing artificial organs, just a tremendous leap forward. This restructuring is to assist that kind of technology, make sure we have the dollars that we can afford the technology into the future. This is what the bill is about. It's about supporting health care in Ontario, and with the passage of this bill, I don't think there's any question that we will be able to look after the health of the people in the province.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Flaherty has moved government notice of motion number 19. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hodgson, Chris	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Skarica, Toni
Beaubien, Marcel	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Mazzilli, Frank	Tumbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Guzzo, Garry J.	Palladini, Al	

The Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bartolucci, Rick	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 46; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: The ayes being 46 and the nays being 29, I declare the motion carried.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)
22	1045	1	18

Should read:

most precious commodity of our new millennium. I

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Sean G. Conway, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli, John R. O'Toole,
R. Gary Stewart, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Ted Arnott, Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Monte Kwinter, Tina R. Molinari,
Gerry Phillips, Toni Skarica
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Présidente: Marilyn Mushinski
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Julia Munro
Toby Barrett, Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese,
Julia Munro, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffier: Viktor Kaczowski

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier, Leona Dombrowsky,
Bert Johnson, Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Joseph Spina, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Joseph N. Tascona
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Marcel Beaubien, Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Brenda Elliott, Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Brad Clark
Marilyn Churley, Brad Clark, Caroline Di Cocco,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Jerry J. Ouellette, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N.
Tascona, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, John Hastings,
Shelley Martel, Bart Maves, Julia Munro,
Marilyn Mushinski, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Président: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Claudette Boyer, Brian Coburn,
Garfield Dunlop, Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy,
Frances Lankin, David Young
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

CONTENTS

Wednesday 8 December 1999

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Universal Declaration of Human Rights	
Mr Patten.....	1217
Ramadan	
Mr Gill.....	1217
Closure of agriculture offices	
Mrs Dombrowsky.....	1217
Christmas festivities in Durham	
Mr O'Toole.....	1218
Hospital services	
Mr Levac.....	1218
Municipal restructuring	
Ms Martel.....	1218
Johnny Lombardi	
Mrs Molinari.....	1219
Emergency services	
Mr Duncan.....	1219
Local hero in Oshawa	
Mr Ouellette.....	1219

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on regulations and private bills	
Mr Dunlop.....	1220
Report adopted.....	1220
Standing committee on government agencies	
Report deemed adopted.....	1220

FIRST READINGS

Municipal Amendment Act (Rental Housing Protection), 1999, Bill 30,	
<i>Mr Marchese</i>	
Agreed to.....	1231
Mr Marchese.....	1231

THIRD READINGS

Safe Streets Act, 1999, Bill 8,	
<i>Mr Flaherty</i>	
Agreed to.....	1220

ORAL QUESTIONS

Emergency services	
Mr McGuinty.....	1220
Mrs Witmer.....	1221
Municipal restructuring	
Mr McGuinty.....	1221
Mr Clement.....	1221

Plutonium transport

Mr Hampton.....	1222
Mr Tsubouchi.....	1222
Ms Churley.....	1223

Premier of Ontario

Mr Hampton.....	1223
Mr Hodgson.....	1223
Mr Flaherty.....	1223

Cancer treatment

Mrs McLeod.....	1224
Mrs Witmer.....	1224

Student assistance

Mr Newman.....	1224
Mr Cunningham.....	1225

Doctor shortage

Mr Gerretsen.....	1226
Mrs Witmer.....	1226

Arts and cultural funding

Mr Galt.....	1226
Mrs Johns.....	1227

Millennium memento

Mr Marchese.....	1227
Mrs Johns.....	1227

Hospital funding

Mr Agostino.....	1228
Mrs Witmer.....	1228

Northern highway improvement

Mr O'Toole.....	1229
Mr Hudak.....	1229

Rendering industry

Mr Cleary.....	1230
Mr Hodgson.....	1230

PETITIONS

Medical laboratories

Mr Kwinter.....	1232
Mr Curling.....	1233

Occupational health and safety

Mr Christopherson.....	1232
Ms Martel.....	1234

Municipal restructuring

Mr Skarica.....	1232
-----------------	------

Northern health travel grant

Mrs McLeod.....	1233
Mr Gravelle.....	1233
Mr Brown.....	1235

Karla Homolka

Mr O'Toole.....	1234
-----------------	------

Ipperwash Provincial Park

Mr Phillips.....	1234
------------------	------

Highway safety

Mr Hoy.....	1234
-------------	------

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mr Hampton.....	1235
-----------------	------

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Time allocation, government notice of motion number 19, <i>Mr Sterling</i>	
Mr Flaherty.....	1235
Mr Bradley.....	1236
Mr Martin.....	1238
Mr Newman.....	1242
Mrs Pupatello.....	1244
Ms Martel.....	1247
Mr O'Toole.....	1250
Mr Kennedy.....	1253
Mr Galt.....	1254
Agreed to.....	1256

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

The Speaker.....	1219, 1230
------------------	------------

Attendance of members

Mr Sterling.....	1225
Mr Duncan.....	1225
The Speaker.....	1225

Use of question period

Mr Kormos.....	1229
The Speaker.....	1230

Omnibus legislation

The Speaker.....	1231
------------------	------

Decorum in chamber

Mr Conway.....	1231
The Speaker.....	1231
Mr O'Toole.....	1232

Erratum.....	1256
--------------	------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mercredi 8 décembre 1999

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités en ce qui concerne la protection des logements locatifs, projet de loi 30, <i>M. Marchese</i>	
Adoptée.....	1231

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues, projet de loi 8, <i>M. Flaherty</i>	
Adoptée.....	1220



No. 26A

N° 26A

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 37th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 9 December 1999

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 3, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George / Projet de loi 3, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur les événements qui se sont produits au parc provincial Ipperwash et qui ont conduit au décès de Dudley George.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): This is a matter of extreme importance to the Legislature in Ontario. I remind us that four years ago, on Labour Day weekend, a land dispute took place between the OPP and our First Nations, who had strong reason to believe that a burial ground was at Ipperwash Provincial Park. It was the first time in 100 years that a First Nations person was killed in a land dispute in Ontario. It led to the conviction of a senior OPP officer for criminal negligence causing death, and it is a black eye on the province of Ontario. It is extremely important that we get a full explanation of what happened at Ipperwash Provincial Park and what led to the death of Dudley George. I might add that two of Mr George's brothers, Reg and Sam, are here with us today.

One reason that this matter is extremely important is that there is considerable evidence that the Premier, senior members of his cabinet and at least one backbench member of his government were directly and inappropriately involved in this action. The only way to clear the air is with an independent public inquiry. What could be more important in a democracy, when there are serious allegations against the head of the government and his cabinet, allegations backed by considerable evidence, than that these government members remove themselves from the obvious conflict—they are in a conflict of interest—and allow an independent public inquiry to be held into these events? When all of us are doing what we can to ensure that all the citizens of this province obey

our laws, we cannot allow a situation where the head of our government uses the power of his office to avoid a thorough investigation of clear evidence against him and his cabinet of inappropriate behaviour in a very serious matter. I remind us that there was the death of a First Nations person involved and the conviction of a senior OPP officer for criminal negligence.

Why do I say there is evidence of inappropriate behaviour? Let me read into the record a few examples. By the way, I have seven pages of what I regard as inappropriate behaviour and contradictory evidence.

The first I'll read is from Hansard. The question was asked, "Premier, what directions did you give to Ms Hutton before she went into that September 6 meeting with the OPP superintendent?" Mr Harris said, "None. I gave no direction."

We then find contradictory evidence of minutes taken at that meeting. Here it refers to "D. Hutton," the Premier's executive assistant, saying "Premier last night, OPP only, out of the park only—nothing else." Contradictory evidence: The Premier said he gave no instructions; the minutes say he did.

The Premier said this in Hansard: "I determined nothing. I gave no direction. I gave no influence on it. We left that entirely to the OPP." The *Sarnia Observer* headline on the day of the shooting said, "Queen's Park to Take Hard Line with Occupiers."

Another piece of contradictory evidence is an injunction the government sought. The Attorney General said, "Quite simply, this was a very standard procedure and a very usual procedure in these kinds of situations."

But here's what the police said. This was literally two hours before the shooting. The two senior OPP command officers said, when they heard what the government was going to do—the government changed directions from what the plan was two hours before the shooting—it said, and these are the two senior officers: "Well, that injunction surprises me. They"—the government—"went from that regular type of injunction to an emergency type, which you know really isn't in our favour. We want a little bit more time." The Attorney General is saying that it was usual procedure. Our senior OPP officers are contradicting the evidence.

Another piece of contradictory evidence: "At no time did the police receive any instructions from anyone that I know of within my caucus or my office or me from the cabinet."

Again, literally four hours before the shooting at the police command post, Marcel Beaubien is in the com-

mand post, where the police are trying to plan and carry out their operations. This is the local government member who was at the command post on several different occasions. This is what the police log said—this was at 6:42 of the night of the shooting, literally about four hours before the shooting took place—"Marcel Beaubien states to the police he doesn't mind taking controversy. 'If the situation can't be handled by police services, something has to be done to handle the situation.' Marcel Beaubien was in that night. He had talked to the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. They were comfortable.

1010

"Inspector Carson advised that Marcel Beaubien has been in contact with Staff Sergeant Wade Lacroix. He advised he was calling the Premier." Constant interference in the operation of the police. Inappropriate, totally inappropriate.

"The First Nations went into the park because they have evidence of a burial ground there." That was raised in the Legislature, and the Attorney General said, "That isn't why they went into the park." Well, there is page after page of evidence that they stated that's why they were going into the park.

Guess what? The government ultimately found in its own files evidence of a burial ground and this is what the document says: "The crown has confirmed the existence of correspondence between the federal Indian Affairs branch and the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests which refers to the old Indian cemetery which is located within the territory now being developed as a park. It has been clearly indicated by Provincial Division judges at pre-trial that this defence will succeed in all instances."

The government had to drop 23 charges because of that evidence. So I say there is clear evidence of serious wrongdoing by our head of government and by the cabinet, and yet the government has the tools to block an inquiry, to block an inquiry from happening. What could be more important than a clear airing of these serious allegations against the head of state, the head of our government and the cabinet?

The bill that we're debating today does two simple things: It says the government commits to holding a public inquiry. So we no longer will allow the government to hide behind the lack of a public inquiry.

The second thing it says is, "The commission may defer beginning the inquiry if necessary to avoid prejudice to any person who is a party to court proceedings concerning matters which may be a subject of the inquiry." In other words, we answer the Premier's, I believe, stonewalling tactic by saying the commission, which will be appointed by the government, has the authority to defer beginning the hearing until satisfied that it would jeopardize no one's right to a fair trial.

If Premier Harris has nothing to hide, he should have no problem with this bill. I believe a public inquiry would prove that he and other members of the cabinet were inappropriately involved in this matter. I believe they will try to perpetuate the cover-up by dragging out

the civil court trial for years, bankrupt the George family, which is a family of modest means trying to fight the government, and hope that the public runs out of interest in the issue.

I return to the central issue for all of us: What could be more important in a democracy than ensuring that when there are serious allegations with considerable evidence—these aren't simply allegations. There is considerable public evidence against the head of our government and senior cabinet ministers. When they're accused of serious, inappropriate behaviour, then we need to ensure that we remove them from controlling whether there is an investigation of that. They have a clear conflict of interest.

That's what this bill does. It allows for a public inquiry with a respected person or persons selected by the government and they will have the power to conduct a fair, thorough investigation. I cannot understate the importance of this: Serious allegations against the government, the death of a First Nations person the first time in the entire century, the conviction of an OPP officer for criminal negligence, and the government is hiding. They are afraid to hold a public inquiry. If we want the public to have confidence in its government, we cannot allow the head of the government to hide from these serious allegations. We must have a public inquiry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak firmly and clearly in support of this bill and the proposition contained within it. I can tell you that Gilles Bisson, our member responsible for native affairs, as well as Howard Hampton, our leader, will be addressing the bill as well.

It's been an incredible history of events: four years and counting, Dudley George shot down, murdered, in Ipperwash and a succession of not just allegations but bits and pieces of evidence which point to and raise the clear spectre of direct government involvement—this government, this Premier, this Premier's advisers and at least one of this Premier's backbenchers as well as, perhaps, the Attorney General and Solicitor General of the day being directly involved, politicizing the role of the Ontario Provincial Police; Marcel Beaubien, the member for now Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, and the comments attributed to him, "If they're not out of the park something has to be done," and the other now notorious comment, "Get the fucking Indians out of the park," as well as a Premier who has stonewalled and resisted any fair and thorough inquiry into what was the murder of a peaceful and gentle—

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I realize the member may be quoting something, but I don't think we use that type of language in this House.

The Acting Speaker: There is nothing out of order with the language. It may be inappropriate but that's up to the member.

Mr Kormos: It is regrettable that native persons, First Nations persons, would be spoken of in that context and with that level of disdain and repugnant language. I regret having to refer to it, but the fact remains that it's a statement that has clearly been identified as having been made. Let's not ignore the realities here. Let's understand that this has not only been an injustice, a grave injustice, of course, to Dudley George and to his family, but a grave injustice to the First Nations people of this province and of this country and a grave injustice to the community, the members of this province and of this country, all of us as residents or citizens.

The Premier has very skilfully avoided attendance at examinations for discovery so that he can be compelled to give evidence under oath. Every indication is there that he will continue to use every legal means to the point of pettifoggery to avoid appearance for the purpose of examination for discovery.

Dudley George, his family, First Nations people and the people of this province deserve nothing less, and the call today is for nothing less than a public inquiry with the full disclosure of the course of events that led to the murder of Dudley George, and a clear result indicting those who will be found or could be found or may be found to be responsible for those unconscionable actions some four years ago.

1020

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rose-dale): It's a great honour for me to have an opportunity to participate in the ballot item moved by my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I think it's important to note that in working on this issue for quite some time he has prepared a significant body of evidence. The need is clear. It is to get to the bottom of the circumstances surrounding the death of Dudley George.

It seems to me that we in this House owe it to our First Nations community to ensure that justice is properly served and that we examine all the facts and all the serious allegations that had been made. There is, it would seem, a very strong body of evidence that suggests that members of the government—the Premier, members of the cabinet and government backbenchers—were directly and inappropriately involved in the first death in over 100 years of a First Nations person stemming from a land claim dispute.

The approach my colleague, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, puts forward is one that is independent. He has done work and has brought forward a body of evidence to us in this House to consider whether we should support the establishment of an independent public inquiry. We don't prejudge the results of that. This allows for protection of anyone before the courts. It allows for the government to appoint an independent public jury that would take a look at this issue and get to the bottom of it, to determine whether justice has been served for Mr George.

I would say that some members of the government should think very carefully about the way they decide to vote in this private members' hour today. To date, this

has been something the government has been involved in stonewalling. The Premier himself has avoided examinations for discovery. But failure by members of the government to support this initiative today involves you and implicitly supports a programmed cover-up on the part of your government. The Premier needs to live up to the responsibilities that we as public servants are expected to uphold. Public officials should bear a higher test in terms of the way we use the resources of government and the way we treat our citizens, and that has not been served here to date.

Page after page of very serious allegations have been brought forward. This issue has been discussed, and it has received considerable media coverage. But it is clear that justice has yet to be served in this issue. Mr George deserves nothing less than the support of this Legislature to determine the extent to which the government played a role—directly and inappropriately involved, we allege—in the death of Dudley George.

Again, we encourage the government members opposite not to involve themselves in what would seem to be a systematic attempt to ensure that all the facts do not see the light of day. I urge members opposite, in the name of justice and in the name of the highest calling, the highest level of public disclosure, to support this bill and allow an independent public inquiry to be established.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): First of all, as the critic for native affairs for the NDP caucus, I want to say outright and at this point that our caucus will be supporting this bill put forward by the honourable member, for a lot of reasons that were spoken to a little earlier and will be spoken to. But I want to say that we support to the utmost what he is trying to do here. Quite frankly, what we have seen over the past four years is a government that on every occasion has tried to duck out from its responsibility on this whole matter.

I'm not going to go through all the events that led to the unfortunate death, or I should say murder, of Dudley George. But it is fairly clear from the evidence as we see it, and as I think any fair-minded person would see it, that the police were basically influenced by the provincial government. The Mike Harris government—Mr Beaubien, Mr Harris himself and other members of his government—had their hands all over this thing. It was out of character for the Ontario Provincial Police to move in the way they did the night Dudley George was killed. We know, because the OPP were under directives from our government previously, that in no case and at no time should the OPP react the way they did. I know from talking to OPP officers since then that they felt a great amount of pressure on the part of the government on this particular issue. It was stated earlier, in the comments made by the Harris government in regard to its decision to send the police in and to kick "the [expletive] Indians out of the park," and the influence by the local member. But I'll leave that for another part of the debate.

What bothers me in this debate is not only what has happened to Dudley George, as far as the murder of an innocent human being who was trying to advocate for

what was rightfully a very important issue for that community, but how the government has since handled this whole issue. Can you imagine what would happen in a democracy if a person was charged with murder and ducked out from being subpoenaed for discovery, ducked out from going to court, and at every turn basically ducked out from the due process of law? Can you imagine if you were put in that situation? If one of you in the gallery was charged with what should be charged in this case and didn't go to court, what would happen to you? They'd pick you off the street, drag you into court and put you in jail to make sure you testified to what you had done; you couldn't get away. But on three occasions, now, this government has wiggled out of its responsibility when it came to discovery.

First, the former Attorney General, Mr Harnick, was supposed to go to discovery in, I believe, September of this year and didn't show up—all kinds of legal wrangling. We know the Attorney General was involved in this process. I suspect that one of the reasons the Attorney General didn't run for re-election had a lot to do with what happened in this whole issue.

The second issue is what happened to the Solicitor General of the day. He too was served for discovery. Can you imagine what would happen if a citizen of this province got served for discovery and didn't show up time after time? Well, what happened was that the Solicitor General, the former top cop in the province of Ontario, got subpoenaed on this issue and didn't show. He used his lawyers to find all kinds of reasons why they can't do it on that day and why they shouldn't go. Then the Premier, the head of the cabinet, the head of the government of the province of Ontario, who is quoted as having said, "Get the [expletive] Indians out of the park," didn't show for his discovery, and instead spends millions of taxpayers' dollars to defend himself against an action he took. I find that quite extraordinary. If any other citizen of this province was put in the position that this government is, I suggest they wouldn't have gotten away with it as long as they have.

The second thing I find quite appalling this morning is the apparent silence of the government in this debate. If the government and government backbenchers feel so strongly that, as I suspect, they're going to vote against this bill, I would think that they would get up and say to the George family and other people watching today why they are going to vote against this bill. Look them straight in the face and say, "We believe, for the following reasons ..." and explain why you're not going to vote for this bill. I find the silence of the government, skipping the rotation in debate this morning, quite amazing.

I ask the government members to do the right thing for once. A person has been murdered, plain and simple, and justice has to be given. Up to now, justice has not been given because this government has been running away from its responsibility. I ask the government members to do what's right and to allow this bill to pass so we can have a full public inquiry into the issues. If they think they're innocent, then they've got nothing to hide.

1030

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I think it's extremely important that we bring closure to this question surrounding the allegations made with considerable evidence. The Premier and cabinet have a responsibility to allow an independent evaluation of the evidence.

I have been privileged to know numerous members of the native community within Sarnia-Lambton. There's a legacy of injustice towards our native communities that is unprecedented to any other communities of indigenous population. I understand this quest for getting to the truth. For eight years I have attempted to do the same in my own community, which ended up in a judicial inquiry regarding people who made decisions on our behalf.

An inquiry will bring out the truth and clear the air, and I would think that the government would be glad to get the air cleared on this. I suggest that stonewalling as much as the Premier has done begs the question, why? The life of Mr George is of great value. I believe it is incumbent on us and on the government to have an inquiry into this matter so that we can bring closure to the question surrounding the allegations.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to take part in this debate today, because there are a number of things that the government needs to realize and that the government members need to realize.

The first thing everyone needs to realize is that this issue is not going to go away. All the delaying tactics, trying to switch lawyers in midstream—again what I would term a delaying tactic in this context—are not going to work. The truth is going to come out. Whether an inquiry eventually is called here in the province of Ontario or whether an inquiry is called by the federal government, the people who want the truth to come out, who believe that there has to be accountability, are not going to go away. To the government members, who I suspect will vote to a one against this bill, I would say to you that at some point this will have to have a public airing. There will have to be public accountability on these issues.

The government and government members make much of trying to say that there can't be an inquiry because some of these matters are still before the court. I want to spend some time pointing out exactly all the issues that could be subject to a public inquiry now, could have been subject to a public inquiry some time ago, without in any way affecting the guilt or innocence of a particular party.

Let me point out some of the questions that need to be answered and some of the questions that need to be asked. Part of what is so puzzling about the events around Ipperwash and the fact that a government MPP was present in the command post of the Ontario Provincial Police—now, that in itself is highly unusual. It is highly unusual for an elected member who is part of the government caucus to be anywhere near a police operational effort. Not only that, but we know that there

was communication—in fact there were extended communications—between that government member and representatives of the Premier's office at the time when these matters were being dealt with, again highly unusual.

I would suggest that without necessarily inquiring into the guilt or innocence of a particular person, the question needs to be asked, what was a government MPP doing in the command post of the Ontario Provincial Police when these events began to transpire? That is a question that OPP officers want to have an answer to.

But there are some other questions that need to be answered. We know that the Ontario Provincial Police had a protocol and guidelines for dealing with these kinds of issues with First Nations. We know that their protocol called for them to engage in activities which lessen the possibility of conflict, which would tend to move away from conflict and move towards conciliation. Yet, at Ipperwash, the OPP apparently did not act according to their own protocol. Why? What would cause the Ontario Provincial Police not to follow, not to obey their own protocol?

Second, we know that in the utilization of police tactical units in the late 1980s and 1990s there were some very unfortunate accidents. This resulted in an inquiry, the Drinkwater inquiry. Douglas Drinkwater came forward with some recommendations on the utilization of police tactical units and those recommendations became part of the police method of operation. At Ipperwash, the OPP did not follow the Drinkwater recommendations either.

We also know that the Ontario Provincial Police have a training manual that all officers who go into the tactical units have to follow. They're trained in this. At Ipperwash, the OPP did not follow their training manual either for the utilization of tactical units. Why? What could cause the Ontario Provincial Police to not obey and follow three of their own things: protocols, training manuals and guidelines? Those are questions which should be answered by a public inquiry, can be answered by a public inquiry—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you; the member's time has expired.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): What I find perplexing in this is why it has come to this. If there had been an accident involving a tourist in the park when it was operating, there would have been an investigation of some sort, an inquiry to determine the individuals responsible for it. Given these circumstances, any rational person would have made the decision months or years ago to proceed with it, to determine what happened.

If everything is as presented by the government side, then what's the problem with an inquiry? It can't be money. I don't believe money can be an issue in this, because the government had \$112 million for advertising. Surely the life of a citizen would be more important than another ad on TV or an ad on an expressway. Since

everything else seems to be driven by money, we can throw that one out at this stage.

My wife and I have a son who's First Nations. Before he came to live with us, we assumed that though he may have a different cultural background there would be absolutely no difference in the way the community treats him. We found that to be the case for our neighbours, for the people I work with, for the people we shop with and associate with. The fact that he's First Nations has made no difference at all to them. But where we have found a bias is in dealing with governments. There continues to be a paternalistic kind of attitude that they know better than he does and that he's not able to make his own decisions and that he needs advice. Certainly he's a full Ontario citizen, but just not quite full. That saddened me, because I didn't believe that existed.

Twenty-one years ago there was no doubt in my mind that whatever the cultural background, wherever they were from, whatever their particular interests in life were, it didn't make any difference. But it does make a difference, unfortunately, to some people. If there are no problems, the fact is that we have significant numbers of people in this province who believe that there needs to be an inquiry, that there is a different treatment and we need to proceed and deal with it and get rid of that.

1040

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

I'm honoured to rise to speak in support of this bill today in this Legislature. I want to talk about two things in particular. I want to talk about courage and I want to talk about cowardice, a family's courage and a government's cowardice.

I want to begin by saluting my colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. Gerry Phillips is deeply committed to finding the truth, the truth about Ipperwash. His continuing and tireless efforts on this matter are a testament to his decency, his work ethic, and his commitment to doing, quite simply, what is right.

But the member for Scarborough-Agincourt would be the first to tell you that his contribution has been relatively small compared to that made by the George family. This is a family that has shown enormous courage. They suffered the deepest personal loss one can imagine when Dudley George was shot dead in a protest outside Ipperwash Provincial Park on September 6, 1995. They lost someone they love, and they lost him suddenly and without explanation.

One might understand if this family simply walked away to take time to heal, but instead they have taken on the most powerful interests in our province. They don't seek revenge, they're not seeking attention, and they're not seeking personal gain. All they seek is the truth, the truth about Ipperwash, and despite very, very modest resources, the George family has fought for the truth now for four gruelling years. They have fought in our courts and they have fought in the court of public opinion. They have fought tirelessly and courageously.

We have to ask ourselves, why is it that it has been such a long and difficult fight for this family? The

answer is, because of the cowardice of this government. Simply put, this government is afraid of the truth, and a government that hides the truth is not worthy of the people it is elected to serve.

The family was given no choice but to bring a lawsuit against the Premier and the members of his cabinet, but the ministers and the Premier continue to ignore our courts and to use stalling tactics wherever possible. The government's contempt for the courts is exceeded only by the contempt it has shown for the George family. It's ironic that a government that so overreacted to a roadblock at Ipperwash has now thrown up roadblock after roadblock after roadblock in front of the George family. This is cowardice of the worst possible kind.

You have to ask, what is it that the government is so afraid of? Ian Urquhart of the Toronto Star put it very eloquently this week when he wrote, "There is one downside to a cover-up, no matter how well it might be executed: It tells everyone that there is something to hide." If this government has nothing to hide, then surely it will support this bill, because this bill would set up a commission of public inquiry. The George family has said it will drop its suit if there is a public inquiry, because all, in the end, that this courageous family wants is the truth: the truth about Ipperwash; the truth about why something went terribly wrong despite the OPP's lengthy history of dealing with these situations peacefully and successfully; the truth about the government's hard-line approach; the truth about what orders were issued to, as the quote goes, "Get those Indians out of the park."

The truth, the truth about Ipperwash: That is all that the George family is asking for, that is what they deserve, and that is what we in this Legislature have a responsibility to give them. I am very proud to support this bill.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm pleased to join this debate but I'm not pleased with the commentary that becomes necessary. We stand here, in private members' hour, dealing with a moral and ethical issue that's drawn international attention, the unwarranted killing of a civilian in peaceful protest who happens to come from one of our First Nations.

We're supposed to be here in this forum as parliamentarians as the highest authority in this province, and not one of the members of the government will speak to this issue, will deign to give an opinion about this. We have a whipped silenced on the other side of this House, and what we have is an ignorance against the truth. It's only in that kind of society, where we can have that kind of grip on what people say, that we can't get at the truth.

What are the members opposite afraid of? What is there about that small group of people who were in that park—that was an Indian burial ground, as we found out later, that was known to the provincial government to have a basis for a peaceful protest. What is it about those OPP transcripts that mention the Premier's office? What is it about the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton who was in that command post, in that trailer in a very unusual way? What is it about the involvement of officials from the Premier's office or from the government that has silenced

the entire opposite side of the House on a moral and ethical issue, that does not even deign to pay respect to the legitimate concerns of Ontario citizens and of the whole First Nations community of this province?

I stand here to support this bill and the actions of the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, but not this government.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): As usual the member for Parkdale-High Park has drawn some conclusions about this side of the House that are wrong. I rise on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House to say that the government has in fact decided not to debate this bill. Our reasons for this are consistent with our previous comments concerning the very sensitive nature of this issue. It's our position that the private member's bill from the member from Scarborough-Agincourt should not be before this House at this time.

Two criminal matters and three civil matters relating to the tragedy at Ipperwash are still before the courts. The Legislature's rules of debate, we believe, are very clear and should be equally as clear to the members opposite. Section 23, in part, says, "... a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she ..." says certain things, and I refer you to subsection (g) where it continues by saying the items for which a member shall be called to order. They include referring "to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding ... that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination."

With respect to the outstanding criminal cases, the Court of Appeal has reserved judgment. Regarding the civil action, the lawyers for the defendants sought assistance from the court in moving the matter forward. At the request of the lawyers for the defendants, a judge has been designated to hear all motions involved so that it proceeds as efficiently as possible.

Because this is still before the courts, we want to stress that everyone from the Premier to the former Solicitor General to the former Attorney General has every intention of co-operating with the courts. We are not ruling anything in or out with respect to a public inquiry. What we do say is that we on this side of the House believe that it is important to respect this place and to conduct our business in accordance with respect not only for the rules of this House but for the judicial system in our province. Under these circumstances no further comment, we believe, is appropriate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Further debate? There being none, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt in response.

Mr Phillips: I go back to my bill. The Premier has refused to ever, ever commit to holding a public inquiry. I say there is overwhelming evidence of the need for a public inquiry. I say that these are more than allegations, that there is evidence of the need for a public inquiry. The Premier has never, ever said he would hold a public inquiry. In my view he is deliberately stonewalling this issue in the hope that it will fade from people's memory. I will remind the Legislature that the Supreme Court of Canada indicated that an inquiry could begin when there

are still criminal matters before the courts. But even then, this bill says that the commission can defer beginning the inquiry if he or she has any concerns about the right to a fair trial for anyone.

What this is all about is that the head of our government has had serious allegations, with considerable evidence, made against him and many members of his cabinet. He is refusing steadfastly to hold a public inquiry into these matters, to even commit to holding a public inquiry. That's what this bill is all about. We want from the Premier an assurance that there will be a public inquiry.

Does anybody here believe there's not sufficient evidence that there should be a public inquiry? Does anyone here believe there's not considerable evidence that we need this fully aired? Does anyone here believe the Premier is not in a direct conflict of interest?

I say to the government members, do the right thing. Have this government commit to an inquiry. Give the government-selected commission the right to begin the inquiry when he or she is satisfied that no one's right to a fair trial is jeopardized.

The Acting Speaker: The disposition of this matter will take place at 12 noon. This House will stand in recess until 11 o'clock when I will retake the chair.

The House recessed from 1052 to 1102.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

Mr Spina moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to ensure that food banks account for donations / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à assurer que les banques d'alimentation rendent compte des dons.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I'm pleased to have the opportunity today to discuss an issue of importance to my constituents and I think to many residents across Ontario.

Before I get into the details of discussing the Food Bank Accountability Act, I want to state for the record that I appreciate and understand the hard work and dedication of the thousands of workers and volunteers at food banks across this province. On behalf of government members, I want to say thank you for all your efforts.

I want to encourage all members to contribute to and support these hard-working, legitimate food banks and people in need, especially during this important Christmas season.

If passed, the bill will: require food banks to be corporations without share capital, at least under the current structure of the bill; ensure a food bank uses all donations that it receives for its intended purpose, which, of course, is the needy; require food banks to maintain records that account for all donations of money, food and other things; and make the above records available to the public where requested.

Locally in Brampton, I met with Morris Samson of the Salvation Army, as well as Roger Peddle, the chair of the Red Shield campaign, and Gary Cresswell, their operations manager, to go over my proposed legislation. They're supportive of the bill and its intentions. Of course, there are a few things we can improve upon in the bill, and if it got to the stage of going to committee, then we would certainly be willing to look at aspects to improve the bill.

Our local Salvation Army indicated that as a result of this case, Thanksgiving donations were down, the case being the incident that took place in Brampton back in September and early October, just before Thanksgiving, where a local food bank operator was charged with one count of defrauding the public and accused of taking as much as \$250,000 in donations and selling at least 10 skids of food for about \$80,000. The allegation, according to the police, was that the donated food was sold to liquidators, small grocery and convenience stores around the GTA and as far away as North Bay. Constable Harnden from the Peel Regional Police Service said his investigation, started in April, was sparked by information from a similar investigation at a Toronto food bank two years ago.

In October 1999, the operator of the Brampton Food Bank, as I said, was arrested and charged. They indicated that one of the main problems with the unregistered food banks is the lack of government regulation; and indicated that there's a need for government regulation in this industry as a whole. We do have some self-regulation, and I compliment the Ontario Association of Food Banks and the Canadian association, which oversee their members with internal guidelines and rules, such as a ban on bartering, trading and selling of food. However, the Brampton Food Bank, as many of us know, was not an association member—I will stress that—and was not a registered charity. It is also my understanding that membership in the OAFB is voluntary.

My legislation doesn't call for anything more than what the OAFB already does. I applaud the members of the association for their hard work and diligence in putting these policies in place, and I appreciate the fact that they took the time out of their schedule to join us today in the members' gallery. However, now it's time for the unregistered food banks to follow similar policies and practices.

When I introduced this bill, there were concerns raised by many people involved in food banks. I met with the association briefly, stating the reasons for introducing the bill. My intention, and I believe it was theirs also, was to find a way to clamp down somehow on the unscrupulous operators. We did not agree on the method of doing that, and I certainly appreciate their perspective. I will say publicly that I received a letter today, that I know was sent to many members and perhaps there will be some quotes from it today, making clear the position of the Ontario Association of Food Banks, along with the Metro Daily Bread Food Bank, expressing their opposition to the bill. However, I'm very pleased to hear that they

offered some alternative recommendations. I think that wherever this bill goes, we should pursue those objectives and those recommendations.

I'd like all food banks to operate under similar rules and regulations that members at the Daily Bread Food Bank and the other members of the OAFB already do. What's not helpful is when members of the opposition began ranting and raving that this is some sort of way for the government to go after food banks. We're going after unscrupulous operators. There are good people out there who donate thousands of hours to help the public.

There are concerns surrounding the timing of this bill, near the busiest season of Christmas, but the fact is that I don't get to choose my private member's time and we're not being asked to pass this law today.

I encourage all members to contribute and support these hard-working, legitimate food banks, especially during this very important Christmas season, and I assure you that I will continue to consult the stakeholders and receive their advice and input on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Further debate?

1110

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'm not very happy to have to stand up and speak about this bill. This is private members' hour. It's a chance for members to do good. This is not such a bill.

I do not for a second take away from the good intentions of the member for Brampton. However, there is an onus on all of us in public office to ensure we do no harm. This bill raises a spectre about organizations that have nothing to do with the intentions the member has.

Talking about food banks and fraudulent organizations in the same breath is simply wrong. It becomes more than wrong, it becomes harmful, when it happens during the Christmas season when 40% of donations to food banks are expected. It is damaging to food banks to have that occur. So I ask the member opposite to withdraw this bill.

I ask you for that because the food bank organizations affected, that serve importantly, are just like any other organization. They're not rejecting in any way the need for regulation, if there's a legitimate need. But in the course of a year, they serve 300,000 vulnerable Ontarians and 120,000 children.

We're talking about people who don't get enough to eat, children and families whose nutrition is deprived through no fault of their own. That may be a new concept to some of the members opposite. The profile of people using food banks: 32% have some college or university education, their last job was six years—not people who haven't paid taxes but people who have made a way for themselves and have found it difficult.

Today the organizations that are their lifeline—temporarily, usually about four times a year, but at the worst time of their lives—are again under attack, giving them less capability. And the reason is because they're being cast in a negative light.

This is not a bill to commend food banks for what they are doing and to work with them to see that illegitimate organizations are gotten rid of. That's not the thrust of the bill. It suggests a lower standard for food banks than exists today, than is endorsed by the Canadian Association of Food Banks. It provides for an inspector to come in and see if these organizations keep records, a terrible, terrible insult to organizations that have all kinds of controls built in.

Further, it doesn't even have a basis to tell between those who falsify accounting records and those who aren't. It doesn't require those organizations to be charities and, in that case, reduces the standards that are required for food banks to operate. In fact, it's so sloppy in its formation that it misses most of the food banks in the province, because they have to be giving out food directly. Most of the large food banks in this province, like food banks in Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, collect in a large warehouse and then distribute to other organizations. So those food banks are not even mentioned in this. In fact, the fraudulent organizations, the organizations that should be the focus of this bill, the charities that get away with pretending to be what they weren't would be missed in this bill and, simply by keeping fraudulent records, would be able to continue with the false imprimatur from the government that things are OK.

Simply put, this government has no basis to go after food banks on any grounds whatsoever. Food banks in Ontario are not funded by government. Food banks clean up after government. They clean up after reckless cuts to social assistance that take food off the tables of families. That's what happened. Food bank demand went up. These are interdenominational church groups, people from all parts of this House—there's no partisan reflection on food banks. The current chair of the food bank in Toronto is Alan Redway, a former Conservative cabinet minister.

There has never been that kind of reflection on those organizations. They've grown up as community organizations and, frankly, they see this as a slap in the face. They see this at a time when the police made a mistake in bringing up an organization in Brampton, an organization which incidentally was de-listed by food banks in 1990. If there's any place to look, it's at the public accounts of this province and the need to have a proper public trustee's office to make sure that charities—there's a law there already for charities of any type. One was masquerading as an animal shelter. Why attack food banks? Why not go after the animal shelter aspect if you really want to get at fraudulent organizations? Because it says "charitable purpose," it doesn't declare that the charitable purpose is feeding the needy, as most food banks do in their charitable objects.

It leaves open the possibility of visiting the homes of food bank officials, anyplace there could be records. This does not reflect a deep and abiding effort to get at the problems that exist in any part of the charitable world.

I do not want to just conclude with this bill. I think this bill is irrelevant to the lives of the people who are helped by food banks, to the people who volunteer at food banks, and the people who support food banks, except in the negative. What I want to celebrate is that many people—individuals, corporations, employee drives—are organizing this Christmas. I would enjoin the members of this House, who are in a situation to do harm, to convert that into something to do good, because the food banks need assistance at this time of year. There is, for example, an opportunity in Toronto to donate to food banks at any chartered bank between December 13 and January 7. There are all kinds of opportunities.

I just want people to reflect: The fact that people in this country have to beg for food is bad enough. The fact that the organizations that have to provide sometimes small plastic bags of powered milk because there isn't enough food to go around to families for two and three days at a time—the only response, the only thing they hear from Harris government for the whole time it's in office is that one of their members wants them to have to account to the police, to an inspector, and face \$25,000 fines.

I suggest this bill brings disgrace to this House, unless the members opposite do the honourable thing, keep to their good intentions, withdraw the bill, talk to the food banks of this province and find a way to do some good.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's an embarrassment that we should be debating this kind of subject matter, that we should be debating this bill as we approach Christmastime, as food banks across this province—big-city food banks, small-town food banks—find their shelves depleted and more and more families and their kids are looking forward to the bleakest and hungriest of Christmas seasons.

I come from the Niagara region, and one of the things that people are saying down there is, "What a remarkable revelation for this government, because at least the bill indicates that they acknowledge the reality of food banks and the huge communities of hungry and homeless people in this province."

This government doesn't want to support the hungry, and it doesn't want to provide comfort and shelter for the homeless. It wants to jail squeegee kids and panhandlers, and now it wants to strangle food banks like the food banks in the city of Welland or in Thorold that operate in small, modest accommodations and which struggle with a small group of volunteers on a daily basis to collect the modest cans and packaged goods that people are lined up for regularly, every single day of the week including Saturdays and Sundays.

Let me tell you, let me tell Mr Spina, the author of this bill, the one who promotes this philosophy: The people lined up at those food banks aren't there to rip off donors. Sadly and tragically, more often than not, they are there with their eyes downcast and fearful of being seen asking for that small package of food that's going to keep their kids' bellies a little fuller that weekend than they would otherwise have been. And the operators of those food

banks aren't doing it for profit. In most cases they aren't doing it for any remuneration at all. They are members of the various faith communities. They're just plain, simple folk who care about their neighbours and who believe we have a responsibility to ensure that kids don't go hungry.

You believe in eliminating red tape when it comes to your corporate buddies and when it comes to environmental polluters. You believe in eliminating red tape for the high-profit corporate industries. But when you've got small groups in small-town Ontario, volunteers working well beyond anything we should expect of them in terms of the amount of hours, the amount of energy and the amount of their efforts to take care of their neighbours, you want to regulate, you want to red tape. Quite frankly, at the end of the day, you want to put many of these operations of out business. You want them to shut down.

You've got an agenda all right. Your agenda consists of jailing the poor, imprisoning the homeless and making sure that hungry kids' faces aren't seen in public places so that the people of Ontario don't have to be reminded of your insensitivity to the poor, your insensitivity to women and to kids and of your callous disregard for the growing poverty in this province while you and your friends accumulate more and more wealth.

1120

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):

I'm pleased to join the debate with respect to Bill 20 that was brought forward by the member from Brampton Centre. The bill, if passed, will require food banks to be corporations without share capital; ensure that a food bank uses all donations that it receives for its intended purpose, the needy; require food banks to maintain records that account for all donations of money, food and other things and make the above records available to the public.

The goal of Mr Spina, the member for Brampton Centre, is simply this: to ensure that the food bank donations can be accounted for. I quote him: "I cannot sit by and watch people in need and the public being ripped off. We should not tolerate people profiting off the backs of the generous public and, more important, the needy."

What I've heard from the other side today is that they share those principles put out by the member from Brampton Centre, but all I've heard from the other side today is this: They're worried about the timing. The timing is their big concern, that this is going to affect food banks and that it's going to impact them. That's really all their concern is, the timing. They're into optics.

The member for Parkdale-High Park says, "It's an insult to keep records." An insult to keep records? The public demands and expects organizations to be properly run. It's not an insult to keep records.

The bottom line is that we have to open a dialogue. I agree with what the member from Welland says, that there should be a dialogue. The bottom line is, the only way to open up a dialogue is the way Mr Spina is opening it here today. There is a dialogue and I think it's high time. Something very serious happened in Brampton; the members on the other side can basically

make their criticisms and whatever, but something serious happened in Brampton. That's why the member from Brampton has brought it.

I look at the Ontario Association of Food Banks. They wrote a letter, and I've reviewed it. They have some very serious concerns about this bill. But they also have some alternatives to deal with the problem of fraudulent charities more effectively. They merit serious consideration.

I would just point out two that I want to look at. The first one would be amendments to the Criminal Code of Canada to make it easier to prosecute these cases. They say in brackets, "The police have discussed their frustration in this regard." Do you see the federal Liberals doing anything? Of course not. They don't do anything over there when it deals with protecting the public with respect to criminal matters. You're not going to see any amendments to the Criminal Code from the federal Liberals. What you're going to see is continued frustration on behalf of the police, and when situations arise, nothing is going to be done. At least the member for Brampton Centre is proposing an option here, an alternative. We don't hear anything from the other side with respect to this. The alternative is legitimate.

The other alternative, being suggested by the Ontario Association of Food Banks, is better enforcement of the existing Revenue Canada rules concerning charitable status. "The St Francis organization was continuing to issue charitable receipts after criminal charges had been laid against its principals and continue to solicit food donations even now when under another name." They make reference to that organization in their letter. That's very serious, obviously.

If you don't have any status as a charity and you're issuing receipts, you're misrepresenting to the public that you are a legitimate organization. That's very serious. The members on the other side should take it as being a very serious matter.

What we have here is a situation where, if Revenue Canada was more diligent in doing their job—another issue with respect to the federal Liberals if they're not doing their job, as usual—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): We'll get you an audit.

Mr Tascona: I didn't say this. It's coming from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. They're saying the federal government is not doing anything to help the situation. They're undermining the legitimacy of food banks. They're undermining the legitimacy of trying to help people—the federal Liberals, as usual, are undermining the legitimacy of trying to help people. This is coming right from the Ontario Association of Food Banks. It's right here. Read it and understand it. Show some compassion on your side. You never want to do anything with respect to the federal Liberals. It's a do-nothing approach.

The member from Brampton Centre is trying to do something here. He is trying to open up a dialogue with respect to this issue.

I want to refer directly to the bill because I've read the bill, unlike some of the members across the way. The definition of "food bank": "means an agency that receives donations of food and distributes the food for free directly to people in need; ..."

One of the charitable objects of the bill, in section 4, is that, "A food bank shall use all donations it receives for the food bank's charitable objects." I'll repeat that because the other side is getting a little bit too noisy. Section 4: "A food bank shall use all donations it receives for the food bank's charitable objects." That's a tremendous objective.

The requirement for records: "A food bank shall maintain financial records and records accounting for inventory, ... in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; and ... in accordance with prescribed standards, if any."

What is wrong with that? There's nothing wrong with that.

Mr Smitherman: Red tape for food banks.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Toronto-Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Tascona: The member for Toronto-Centre-Rosedale is talking about red tape. We're talking about accountability. There would be accountability and there would be greater ease with respect to the police in this issue if the federal Liberals did—they do nothing.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Hamilton East.

Mr Tascona: What we have right here is that the food banks association indicates that their organization adheres to a strict code of ethics. They don't think there's a necessity for food banks to keep good records and audited financial statements because it's done. All we're saying is that we want to make sure everybody does it. I think it's a laudable objective that Mr Spina is putting forth, that we have financial accountability. After all, the public, out of the generosity of their hearts, is giving food to these organizations and they expect it to be used properly. They expect it to go to the needy.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): What evidence do you have—

Mr Tascona: The bottom line is that all we're hearing from the member from Hamilton is that he's talking as usual because he protects the federal Liberals because they do nothing. He likes the status quo: Do nothing and don't have any accountability. But I'll say this: The member from Brampton Centre is trying to do something and I support him.

Mr Agostino: I'm angered that we're even having this debate this morning. I think my colleague from Parkdale earlier explained what is wrong with this bill, the fundamentals and the contents, or lack of, in this bill. But I think what is even more insulting is the blatant, brutal attack that this bill—it is not only on food banks. Let me suggest that thousands of volunteers and staff work at food banks. Let me suggest that it's a brutal attack on the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who donate to food banks. Let me suggest that, worst of all, it's another

brutal attack on the poor of this province who need and rely on food banks.

This is a disgusting bill. It does nothing to deal with the problems of food banks. It does nothing to deal with the problems of poverty. But once again this government and these members who are defending this bill continue to use it as another wedge issue to beat up on the poor. If you're poor in this province, it's a crime. If you're poor in this province under this government, you should be punished. I love this. Proper use of food collected: Where the hell do you think the food is going to? Do you think the workers take it home?

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm becoming continually annoyed and concerned with the language that is being used in the Legislature. I would humbly ask you to consider the words just used by my colleague opposite and rule whether that is appropriate parliamentary language.

The Acting Speaker: I agree that the language being used is bordering on being unparliamentary. The member would be wise to use more appropriate expressions. Perhaps the member would want to withdraw that word. If not, I think he can continue but consider yourself to be warned.

1130

Mr Agostino: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

What this bill is all about is nothing more than a blatant, sleazy attack on every food bank and every user of food banks in this province. There are organizations—St Matthew's House, in my riding, works out of a church basement. It collects food and distributes it to the single moms of my riding who, because of this government's actions, the third week of the month have no money, no food and are forced to turn to food banks in order to feed their kids. That's what this attack is on. It's an attack on the Neighbour to Neighbour food bank on the mountain in Hamilton, which does the same thing and feeds thousands of families every week who have no money, who run out of money because of what this government has done and their policies.

Instead of using this time as an opportunity to help food banks, to encourage food bank drives, the message we're sending out through this bill and through this government's actions is that somehow food banks are bad, that somehow food banks are wrong, that somehow food banks are misusing their donations. How does that encourage people to donate to food banks? How does that include—

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): When was Neighbour to Neighbour founded?

Mr Agostino: I'm sorry, I'm hearing the former Liberal from Stoney Creek mumbling something there about the poor people in his riding.

What this government should be doing is finding ways of helping food banks. There isn't one cent of government money that goes into food banks. Why are people relying, since 1995, in such greater numbers on food banks? Maybe it's something to do with the fact that

you've cut welfare benefits to 500,000 kids by 22% since you took office. Maybe it's the fact that you've changed the rules to kick many of these folks off welfare and on to shelters and on to the streets. Why don't you look at yourself in the mirror and understand and realize what you've done to the poor in Ontario; why people are relying on food banks now in greater numbers than ever in one of most booming economic times in the history of this province? It's because of what you have done to attack the poor.

I'm angry because this is a blatant, brutal attack that was not necessary, at a time when food banks are looking for the greatest drive of the year, at a time when food banks want to make sure that the kids have food for Christmas. Most of us can't relate to or understand that, but there are a lot of Ontarians who go through that every single day.

I would urge this government, I would urge this member to support the food banks, to support the good people who work at food banks, the Ontarians who donate to food banks, the people who use the food banks while we're drawing up this cheap, sleazy piece of cheap political legislation that does nothing to help food banks or poor people in Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): How low can members of this government force us to stoop in this House? What are we doing here today, debating this odious bill when we know that every month up to 125,000 people in the GTA must use emergency food programs, of which 50,000 are children? What we should be doing here today, I say to Mr Spina, is having a constructive debate about how we can help those people and how we can make sure that people don't go hungry in this province. That's what we should be here to do.

Rather than trying to deal with the causes of hunger, this government has chosen to attack food banks when we should be having a debate on how to eliminate hunger. At the same time that a member of this government would support, I'm sad to see, is talking about cutting red tape across the board for everybody else, business and industry, it's red tape when it comes to that. Here it's accountability when we're talking about the food bank sector. Different strokes for different folks.

This is a direct attack on the caring people in our society, most of whom are volunteers who are doing their best to pick up the slack where governments are falling down. I want to emphasize here that there's nothing new in this. Rather than looking at the issue of poverty and seeking solutions, this government vilifies those afflicted by poverty by welfare-bashing constantly, and by picking on homeless youth who are trying to earn money, and by getting rid of any kind of affordable housing in this province.

The mere existence of this bill stands to undermine public confidence in food banks. Perhaps the member is sincere when he says he didn't mean to do that, but it's very clear by now that that is what's happening. I wish that he had withdrawn this bill today so we wouldn't be disgraced in this way.

The introduction of this bill during the holiday season makes matters much worse. The reputation of food banks is being questioned at a time when those organizations are conducting the food drives that are so necessary to stock their shelves for the winter ahead.

Let's think about this for a moment. Food banks are the creation of caring members of society who realize that everybody has a right and in fact a need to eat. That's all. The only reason for their existence is to feed hungry people. So how can you possibly justify this attack today? Because that's what it is. It may not appear that way to you, Mr Spina, but that is what it is. I would urge you to withdraw the bill. You said, and you acknowledge, that you had a letter with constructive ideas for other ways to deal with accountability. Nobody disagrees that there should be accountability; in fact, there are laws already in place to deal with accountability.

I do want to say that there are people here today from the food bank sector. Some other people came later so I don't have all the names, but Sue Cox, Julia Banks, Devi Arasanayagan, Paula Thiessen, Loren Freid, Jim Russell and others are with us today. I want to take this moment to not only acknowledge their presence and their swift reaction to this odious attack on the work that they're doing, but for all the work that they've been doing, not only in feeding the homeless but by constantly and relentlessly bringing to the attention of the legislators and the public what a terrible crisis we have in Ontario right now with homeless people and hungry people, many of whom are children.

Mr Spina, I appeal to you right now to stand up and withdraw this bill and work with the people who are here today, and if there is a need for a little further accountability, to come up with some reasonable suggestions. Do that, Mr Spina, and get us out of this disgraceful debate that we're having today.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It's a pleasure for me to speak today on the Food Bank Accountability Act, Bill 20. I applaud the member for Brampton Centre for initiating a bill that I believe is long overdue. I have a great deal of concern for those folks who are across who are speaking out against this bill. Do these people not believe in accountability? Do they have something to hide? Is the contributing public being taken advantage of? After what you saw happened in Brampton, do they condone theft? I get very concerned for that. In today's society, those who do things right have absolutely nothing to worry about.

In my riding of Peterborough there are anywhere from 14 to 15 or 16 food banks of various sizes; some are sponsored and registered charities and others are not. I think groups like the Salvation Army, the various church groups and the YWCA are getting concerned that legitimacy in various areas of this province with regard to food banks could be compromised. I believe complete accountability, having been in business for many years, is a necessity that must happen.

Over the last number of years, as more and more food banks endeavour to get additional support, the contributors are questioning their authenticity. Many food banks are encouraging the public to donate money and you have seen them collecting, whether it be on the street corners or at the liquor stores—whatever. People are very concerned and they are now questioning the fact that as they give cash dollars, records are not being kept well. I believe the public has the right to know; if their dollars are being given, they should have access to records and they should have access to make sure there is that complete accountability.

1140

Certainly accountability to ourselves is very important. I also believe accountability to various programs is indeed very important. If that accountability is not there, I am afraid that food banks and other charitable organizations that are needed these days will start to deteriorate because the public will not contribute.

These days, unfortunately, in our society there are a great many scams and much fraudulent activity going on. The public, needless to say, is becoming more and more aware of these types of illegitimate activity, and I believe the public wants accountability. I would suggest that all the food banks would endorse this type of legislation, certainly those who feel they should be accountable.

In the riding there have been rumours of various inefficiencies over the years. Granted, they are rumours, but rumours will lead to reductions and to less support for them. Let's squelch those rumours by making sure that the rules and regulations are in place to make sure that everybody is accountable.

It's interesting to note that in other jurisdictions they do have that accountability, they do have centralized control, they do have controlled distribution. I'd like to mention a couple of them; one especially is the state of Virginia. They have some very major rules that I believe could be used here:

That they hold current tax-exempt, non-profit status from the Internal Revenue Service.

That they provide food directly to the needy, ill or children in the form of meals or food boxes as an ongoing part of their program.

That they have regular days of operation.

That emergency food pantries must have been providing food assistance to people in need for at least three months prior to date of application.

That agencies serving cooked meals must process a current certificate of approval from the local public health authority. I think that is so very important, that we have food safety both in handling and in storage. We want to make sure that the food is healthy and that it is nutritious.

That they must not require any money, property or services from individuals in exchange for food.

That they must have proper storage space for the safekeeping of food products.

I think those are the kinds of regulations, as well as the accountability and records etc, that should be mandatory in this province. But I also want to make one other comment; that is, not only do we constantly increase the availability or the number of food banks, but we should also be looking at ways to help people help themselves. I compliment a number of organizations in Peterborough that have organized community gardens, that have organized collective kitchens, that have a program called Hearts Alive Gleaning. They also have food box programs. Again I suggest that we have to concentrate on helping those help themselves, because without that, we will be reliant on food banks for the next many, many years, and I don't think the people need that. I think they want to learn new ways of helping to process food, how to create their own food and how to grow their own food.

There's absolutely no doubt that we have to help the needy, but we also must protect the public who are giving funds and the dollars and the product to make sure that these food banks work. I'm a great believer in accountability, as I said, whether it's to ourselves or to others. I suggest to the member from Brampton Centre that this initiative should be in a complimentary fashion rather than those that I believe are condemning—well, actually condemn everything in society, and I do feel extremely sorry for them.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): If this really is private members' hour, then any member can bring forward anything he or she feels important. But before you do that, I think it's very important to do research, to involve the communities most directly affected, and I believe there's where the weakness of this bill is.

I suggest to the member from Brampton Centre that had he conferred, discussed and interacted with the people who are directly involved, some of whom are here today and others who have written you, you would not have brought this bill forward. There's the weakness of a government that doesn't involve the people who are most directly involved in something. There's the weakness of this bill.

For that reason, I think the opposition is asking for the right thing to be done, for the bill to be withdrawn. But the reality is that this bill is not going to be withdrawn. I would have only hoped that the member from Brampton Centre would have addressed the needs that he wants to try to get across, that he isn't getting across because he hasn't listened to the Ontario Association of Food Banks. He didn't listen to the Sudbury Food Bank chair either, when he wrote the member and suggested that the best thing that could happen is the withdrawal of this bill, that in fact he put the resources that this bill would create—and let me tell you and let the people of Ontario know that if this bill were to pass, there would be an enormous bureaucracy built up. An enormous cost would have to be incurred to ensure that volunteers do their job the way this government wants.

Let me deal with the Inner City Home in Sudbury that's run by Mary Ali. The stats as of November 30, as of the end of this past month, indicate that they assisted

10,534 people. Of those, 3,628 were children; 4,600 families were assisted; 6,906 adults were assisted. Imagine for a second the bureaucracy, the red tape that would have to be created to number, to verify that so many cans of dented tuna went out to the needy. Imagine the bureaucracy that would grow. Imagine the penalty in this bill: If you make a mistake and you're a small food bank, you get fined \$5,000 and a possible prison term.

It is ridiculous to suggest that this bill does anything except beat up, again, on not only the most needy but those people who want to assist the most needy to ensure that they have something to eat every single, solitary day.

There was an excellent editorial in *Northern Life*. It suggested that it's time to close food banks; that government should ensure, the way their tax dollars are spent, that food banks would be able to be closed as opposed to being mandated to govern, to create red tape, to be bureaucratic, to punish those who wish to help people.

I'd like to quote briefly from this article. "How's this for a Christmas card message at the end of the millennium: Our tax dollars should be spent wisely and humanely." I would suggest to you that this bill is neither wise nor humane, and that's why everyone in this House should vote against it.

1150

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have some grave concerns about this bill as well in that it does a couple of things, from my perspective. Some may or may not know that before I came to this place I, with the help of literally hundreds of others in my community, set up and ran a soup kitchen. I have to tell you what this bill would have done to us at that time and what it will do to others across this province if it becomes the law of the land, is it will inhibit and it will put a chill effect into any of these groups. All these groups want to do, all we wanted to do when we set up the soup kitchen in Sault Ste Marie, was to become a conduit. There were people in the community that we knew had the wherewithal, had extra food to provide to those who didn't, and we were the conduit.

They gave us the stuff and we gave it out. It was as simple as that. No bureaucracy, no big reporting mechanism, no board of directors, no meeting after meeting after meeting. It was simply hundreds of people gathering in the basement of a church, taking food from those who felt that they had enough to give and giving it to those who didn't. I have to say to you that this bill, if passed today, will put a chill effect into that work that goes on that is so important, particularly in these days when the poor are struggling so badly in this province.

The other thing that concerns me about the bill is its attempt to criminalize, again, the poor in this province. They've done it over and over again in the four years that they've been in government. With this bill, they are now going to dump the people who actually provide services to the poor into that same bag.

I object to that and say that it's wrong and it's bad, and I won't be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to stand up and recognize the member from Brampton Centre and the legislation he has brought forward in private members' hour.

That being said, there has been debate whether or not this is an appropriate time and purpose in the legislation. But I think my purpose in standing is to pay respect to the many volunteers—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm sorry, but your caucus is out of time. It was my mistake.

Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was watching the clock as I spoke because I wanted to make sure that my colleague had enough time to put his thoughts on the record and we actually had over four minutes on the clock.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Let me say at the outset that I honestly don't believe that Mr Spina is trying to be cruel, or mean, or do something that might appear to be evil deliberately. But I say very directly that that is the effect of what you're doing if you allow this to go through. I'm going to begin and end on the same note as some of my colleagues and ask you, over the next few moments, to please consider withdrawing the bill.

If you're serious about what you want to accomplish, there are representatives from the food bank community. I'm sure we could find opposition members who are prepared to sit down and try to do something on a non-partisan basis that would achieve what you want without doing the absolutely incredible, horrific, collateral damage that's being done by virtue of you putting this on the floor.

If you don't do that and you have enough of your colleagues stand up and force this through today, you have done something that borders on evil because what you've done is sent out a message about food banks that isn't true.

You're leaving the impression that there's all kinds of fraud going on and all kinds of problems out there with food banks and that's why, boy, you're going to step in and crack down again. That's not the case. In fact, this bill wouldn't even deal directly with the issue that spurred this in the first place.

You are ignoring the fact that it's your government that cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%. Who do you think is using these food banks? The people that you've pushed to the margins of society. And while you—and you supported it—while your government cut the income of the poorest of the poor by 22%, we know from the release of the Growing Gap that the top 10 CEOs in Canada, the majority of them centred here in Ontario, had a 56% increase in their compensation. We're talking millions of dollars.

Whether you know it or not, member, you're leaving the impression in my community of Hamilton that perhaps Joanne Santucci, someone I happen to know personally and can speak to her credibility and commitment, who is the executive director of the Greater Hamilton Food Share program, and all the groups that work with her—Good Shepherd Centre, Neighbour to Neighbour Centre, Wesley Urban Ministries, Mission Services of Hamilton, St Matthew's House, Operation Blessing, Welcome Inn, Salvation Army. Tell me which of those you think is committing fraud. What is so disturbing about this is that you don't even know. You're so insensitive to the plight of those who need food banks that all you can do when you finally admit they exist is to say, "We've got to crack down," like there's some kind of mafia deal going on here.

This is despicable in terms of the message that's going out of this place today, and the only way to make it right is for you to stand up today and withdraw this bill.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Brampton Centre has two minutes to reply.

Mr Spina: I want to thank all the members for their comments, agreeable or disagreeable. It's interesting to note that they seem to think that the use of my name should be an insult. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I'm proud of my name and of my heritage.

The interesting thing is that the member for Parkdale-High Park, who ran a major food bank out west and then came to Toronto—you know, I wonder what planet these guys are on. I didn't hear him talk at any time about turning back part of his six-figure salary into helping the food bank operate better.

Mr Kennedy: It wasn't six-figure. Point of privilege.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Stop the clock. Members will take their seats.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Sit down. The clock will remain stopped while we take some points of order. The member for Hamilton East.

Mr Agostino: I will defer to the member for High Park.

The Acting Speaker: The member for High Park.

Mr Kennedy: Mr Speaker, the member opposite is impugning a member of this House, raising completely inaccurate information. I ask that member to withdraw that information, because I believe it compromises both the order of this House and my privilege.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member withdraw?

Mr Spina: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Broadview-Greenwood.

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've sat in your shoes and I know it's difficult, but our NDP caucus lost about a minute on the clock and—

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I'm not aware that that happened. If it did, I'm sorry, but what's done is done. Now, the member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Spina: The member for Parkdale-High Park made an interesting point, which I think is good. He said the particular bank that was errant, where the charges were laid, was delisted in 1990. I understand that, but the criminal part of it is that this food bank, even though delisted by the association, was able to continue operating for another eight or nine years. The point of it is that, with due respect to the Ontario association, there are 90 members. There are between 400 and 600 food banks in this province. As the member has indicated, we're not looking to chase after the church food bank. What are they going to do? They're going to have to close. If they're affiliated with a recognized charitable organization, they're fine.

I ask the people to support the bill. I ask the public to please ensure that when they make donations this Christmas—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 3. Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 3, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will take the other vote.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Spina has moved ballot item number 10, second reading of Bill 20, An Act to ensure that food banks account for donations.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Members take their seats, please.

Mr Phillips has moved second reading of Bill 3. All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martin, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Patten, Richard
Caplan, David	Guzzo, Garry J.	Peters, Steve
Christopherson, David	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Cleary, John C.	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Colle, Mike	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, David	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Amott, Ted	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Baird, John R.	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clark, Brad	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chns
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Tumbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wettlauffer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Young, David
Hodgson, Chris	Palladini, Al	
Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 41; the nays are 46.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost. There will be a 30-second moment where people may enter or leave the chamber.

FOOD BANK ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ DES BANQUES D'ALIMENTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Spina has moved second reading of Bill 20.

All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until your name is called.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Hudak, Tim	Spina, Joseph
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary

Elliott, Brenda
Flaherty, Jim
Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder

Maves, Bart
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Palladini, Al
Sampson, Rob
Skarica, Toni

Tascona, Joseph N.
Tilson, David
Turnbull, David
Wettlaufer, Wayne
Wood, Bob

language services are enhanced and expanded in the city of greater Sudbury.

To make it simple for the government, we want no less treatment than any other person in this province.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Baird, John R.
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Chudleigh, Ted
Churley, Marilyn
Clark, Brad
Cleary, John C.
Coburn, Brian
Colle, Mike
Conway, Sean G.
Cordiano, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin

Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Ecker, Janet
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hampton, Howard
Hoy, Pat
Jackson, Cameron
Johns, Helen
Johnson, Bert
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, David
Marchese, Rosario
Marland, Margaret
Martel, Shelley

Martin, Tony
Martiniuk, Gerry
Mazzilli, Frank
McGuinty, Dalton
Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Sergio, Mario
Smitherman, George
Stockwell, Chris
Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 24; the nays are 55.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and will return at 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The people in my city and my community grow continually concerned about the direction that the restructuring is taking. In fact, in a letter written by the greater city chamber of commerce in Sudbury to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the chair suggested, "It is unconscionable to expect the taxpayers of the Sudbury area to bear this load"—of transitional costs—"when other communities in the province that have undergone similar amalgamation have received grants from the province." To do so is to show that this government "is not only unfair and biased, but demonstrates partiality and inequity."

That's a concern of the chamber of commerce in Sudbury. That concern was echoed last night at regional council. Unanimously, they passed a resolution asking this government to ensure that transitional costs are picked up by the government. They also passed a resolution, unanimously, to ask and petition the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to ensure that French-

IZETTA HOBBS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On this, the day we celebrate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, I think it's important that we put some skin on the bones of that very important document and talk about some of the people who have lived their lives accordingly and were inspired by that and other documents of its sort.

In Sault Ste Marie, recently we lost just such a person in Izzetta Hobbs, a woman who in Sault Ste Marie exuded all those very important Canadian characteristics: humility, courage, sense of humour, compassion and generosity.

In Sault Ste Marie, the contribution of Izzetta Hobbs was recognized in many ways. She was founder of Big Sisters in our community. She was founding member of the Heart Foundation, the Canadian Hearing Society. She belonged to the Order of Royal Purple. She took leadership in the United Way and just recently, before she passed away, was very active in the development of the teen centre—in fact, Sault Ste Marie's oldest teenager.

It's so important that we remember people like Izzetta, who was recognized by our Governor General as one of Canada's caring Canadians, by the province of Ontario with the Senior Achievement Award, with Sault Ste Marie's Medal of Merit, with the United Way of Canada's Chair of Distinction award and as the Business and Professional Woman of the Decade.

As we search for the heart and soul of this wonderful country we call Canada, let's remember the spirit and drive of Izzetta. Let's be inspired by her great sense of generosity, compassion and community.

HANUKKAH

Mr David Young (Willowdale): Today is the sixth day of Hanukkah, the festival of light, a joyous holiday celebrated by Jews around the world. Hanukkah is an eight-day celebration within the Jewish community. It is a celebration where family, warmth and light are central images.

History tells us that the Greek kings outlawed the Jewish religion and forbade the study of Jewish law.

The desecration of the Temple of Jerusalem represented a continuation of the effort to erase Judaism. The Maccabees led a revolt against their oppressors in defence of their faith. They were successful in regaining control of the temple. This represented the first miracle.

The sacred lamp that was to burn eternally in the temple only had enough oil to burn for one day but continued to burn for eight days, representing the second miracle of Hanukkah.

Hanukkah was observed in the concentration camps and ghettos of eastern Europe. The interred remembered

how God helped the Maccabees fight their enemies. Using margarine from their daily rations as oil and a spoon as a menorah, the prisoners were able to celebrate the festival of light. As the Hanukkah light burned, it kindled a glimmer of hope. If God had provided a miracle to the Maccabees, then perhaps another miracle could save them.

Today Jews around the world celebrate Hanukkah with different traditions and customs, but the message remains clear. The values of freedom, religious tolerance, hope, peace, community and family are passed from generation to generation. As Canadians, we are fortunate to live in a land where these freedoms can be celebrated and enjoyed.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to talk again about the ongoing health care crisis existing in Hamilton-Wentworth. Yesterday I mentioned in the Legislature that in the last two months 25% of the time the emergency departments were on critical care bypass—over 1,000 hours in two months. Let me update the House on what's happening at this point.

As of today, the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp hospitals are at a 98% occupancy rate. As of this morning, 42 patients are waiting in the hallways of Hamilton hospitals to be admitted to a bed, waiting in emergency departments.

There are 175 people in long-term-care beds who should be in a long-term-care facility, not in a hospital ward—175 people occupying beds because we don't have long-term-care facilities.

This government announced 600 beds as of last year. As of today, not one of those 600 beds has been built. Therefore the crisis continues and continues. As of this morning, three of the four hospitals in the city of Hamilton were on redirect, and this minister yesterday had the gall to stand up in the House and brag about how much money they have put into the system, brag about how well they have done.

Why don't we tell that to the hundreds of patients who are being turned away? Why don't we tell that to the 42 patients who have been stacked in the hallways in emergency departments because we can't get beds for them? It's a disgraceful record of a disgraceful government that has abandoned health care, abandoned Hamilton and abandoned patients. Frankly, they are risking the lives of Ontarians every single day by their arrogance and inaction in health care in this community.

1340

QUITCARE PROGRAM

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): Quitting smoking can be a very difficult task. That's why I would like to inform the House about the Homewood Behavioural Health Corp's program called QuitCare.

Homewood is a renowned psychiatric institution in my riding of Guelph-Wellington. They have joined with Boehringer Ingelheim and the Lung Association to create QuitCare, a new program that devises strategies for smokers to break the habit. This program begins by helping individuals understand when, why and how they smoke. This knowledge is then used to design individualized programs.

QuitCare was developed through years of clinical research along with input from smokers themselves. This program is part of our government's \$19-million commitment to prevention of smoking programs for the year 1999-2000, a \$10-million increase over the year before. Homewood was granted \$354,000 to pilot this concept.

Our government is working hard to assist people to stop smoking and discourage others from starting. This is an investment in promoting not only better health for smokers, but preventing disease and offering opportunities to reduce overall health care costs.

QuitCare is available free of charge to over 1,000 smokers in Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin counties. For those interested, they may contact the following number: 1-888-710-1111.

My congratulations to all involved in yet another innovative program underway in Guelph-Wellington.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO MÉMENTO DU MILLÉNAIRE

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): I take great pleasure in rising today to recognize and praise the students of Canterbury High School. Last week these students, as well as other students in the Ottawa area, took the initiative and blew the whistle on the Harris government. They launched an ambitious, region-wide campaign to alert the public to the government's misuse of taxpayers' money, over \$2 million, to send students a millennium memento, the booklet *My Ontario Millennium Memento*.

Tandis que les programmes d'art dans leur école, Canterbury High School, sont menacés par les coupures budgétaires imposées par le gouvernement, l'argent des contribuables est dépensé sur ce livre souvenir. Les étudiants et les étudiantes sont inquiets de cet état de choses.

They are concerned that money is being spent on a keepsake while they do not have the textbooks they need to complete the new curriculum. These are students who have taken an interest in the political process, spotted a wrong and made a determined effort to have their voices heard. We must be proud of them.

Je félicite ces étudiants et ces étudiantes pour leur engagement, leur initiative et leur travail de concert avec les écoles françaises et anglaises de la région d'Ottawa-Carleton. Et à tous, je dis bravo.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise today to applaud a young student from my riding. Jenna O'Connor, a grade 7 student in Peterborough, is the

author of a poem which appears in the My Ontario Millennium Memento book. As the MPP for Peterborough, I would like to tell the members of this Legislature how proud I am of the accomplishment of students like Jenna.

I compliment the 80-plus young people who contributed to the publication of My Ontario Millennium Memento. The enthusiasm and vision of our young Ontarians in making their contribution to a keepsake book that will become history in the future is commendable. Our children dream dreams to shape our future.

This book is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity where students can record some of their life experiences. It will become a lasting legacy of the millennium and something that can be passed on to future generations. It exhibits originality, creativity and innovation and shows diversity.

Student excellence should be shown, and is evident in this publication. Let's say thanks, let's say congratulations, let's say, "Well done, young Ontarians, we are proud of you. Your plans will make your visions a reality." This publication was created for our future and by our future: young Ontarians. In the words of Jenna O'Connor, "So that in the future, we will pass the torch to our daughters and our sons."

RURAL ONTARIO

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Over 40% of the population of southwestern Ontario is considered to be living in rural areas. Since its election in 1995, the Mike Harris government has walked further and further away from rural Ontario.

This government has centralized services rather than providing smaller communities with some control over their own affairs. This government has closed their offices in small communities, forcing people to travel to get the services that used to be just around the corner. This government treats people in rural Ontario like second-class citizens.

Rural Ontarians have a much more difficult time trying to find a doctor, thanks to the shortage this government has failed to solve. Rural schools are being closed. The downloading on municipalities means a rise in user fees, erasing the gains made by your so-called tax cuts. Family support regional offices are gone, and families and children have to do their work by phone. Last week the government betrayed the province's farmers by closing the regional offices in southwestern Ontario. They have slashed over \$8 million from the OMAFRA budget.

Now we see the Harris government threatening to pull out of the federal-provincial farm assistance program. The ministers in other provinces are worried that Ontario will pull up the stakes and abandon the interprovincial agreements.

I guess the Premier is too busy worrying about the squeegee kids in this province to think about rural Ontario. The government's answer to rural Ontario is, "Call 1-800."

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I would like to speak about something the Liberals attempted to make an election issue several months ago: the debt and the deficit. Actually, I'm glad the Liberals tried to talk about fiscal responsibility, because everyone in Ontario knows that they have no credibility when it comes to this issue.

I remember the Liberals saying how the Mike Harris government would have been able to balance the budget sooner had we not cut personal income tax rates in our province. But we all know that tax revenues have increased. So their argument is quite amusing, but sad as well. Does anyone in Ontario really believe that a tax-and-spend Liberal government would have been able to pay off the debt? I don't think so, and neither did the people of Ontario.

I've heard the tired story many times myself, how back in 1989 it was the Liberal government that introduced Ontario's last balanced budget. But let's look at the facts. In 1989 the Liberals actually predicted a deficit of \$577 million. It was the federal government that made an adjustment in personal income tax revenue that gave Ontario an extra \$882 million. An extra \$882 million means we should expect a surplus of \$305 million, right? Wrong. Liberal economics meant \$270 million was wasted, and Ontario had a momentary budget surplus of only \$35 million.

Does anyone expect the Liberals to be able to balance a budget in this province? I don't think so. Their fairy tales of fiscal responsibility are simply false, and, Dalton McGuinty, no one is being fooled.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CHRISTOPHER'S LAW (SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY), 1999

LOI CHRISTOPHER DE 1999 SUR LE REGISTRE DES DÉLINQUANTS SEXUELS

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act, in memory of Christopher Stephenson, to establish and maintain a registry of sex offenders to protect children and communities / Projet de loi 31, Loi à la mémoire de Christopher Stephenson visant à créer et à tenir un registre des délinquants sexuels en vue de protéger les enfants et les collectivités.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1350

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (YOUTH PROTECTION), 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PROTECTION DE LA JEUNESSE)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require a driver's licence to be suspended if a motor vehicle is used when purchasing sexual services from a child / Projet de loi 32, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour exiger la suspension du permis de conduire d'une personne si elle utilise un véhicule automobile alors qu'elle achète des services sexuels d'un enfant.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The member for Sudbury for a short explanation.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): It will be a short explanation. It's a Highway Traffic Amendment Act, a youth protection act. Section 41 of the Highway Traffic Act provides for the suspension of a driver's licence of a person who is convicted of committing offences while using a motor vehicle. The suspension is for one year for a first conviction. The bill adds to the list of offences in subsection 1(4) the offence under subsection 212(4) of the Criminal Code of Canada relating to purchasing the sexual services of a person who is under the age of 18 years.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): It is with pleasure that I rise today in the Legislature to make a commitment on behalf of our government about the future of our children with special needs.

Earlier today I was joined in Mississauga at the Erinoak children's treatment centre by some of these families. We cannot begin to know just how difficult nor how challenging their lives are, nor can we know how every day can bring with it a new hurdle to be cleared. But we do know that these families teach us all about the true meaning of dedication, strength and courage. As a result, the success these children achieve brings joy and pride into everyone's heart.

We are providing an additional \$7 million for respite services. This new funding will increase respite care by as many as 175 hours per year for each of the 1,700 families caring for children who are medically fragile or technologically dependent.

Today I am also announcing four community initiatives that will look at best practices in order to improve the delivery of services to medically fragile and technologically dependent children being cared for at home.

Simcoe county, Halton-Peel, Thunder Bay and Ottawa are the locations which have been selected for these integrated services initiatives. Clearly integration is a key to helping our special needs children realize their potential. By linking social, health, educational and recreational services together, we can create a model that can result in improved access for these families.

Today, we are also announcing \$4 million in new annual funding for children's treatment centres. This funding will help improve access to health services for children with special needs and their families across Ontario, who count on these centres.

All children are a priority for our government. That is why we must, above all else, continue to listen, to support and to communicate with children who have special needs and with all those involved in the daily lives of these children.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Earlier today I introduced a bill that would, if passed, provide stronger, more comprehensive legislation to establish a provincial sex offender registry, the first of its kind in Canada.

Ontario's new bill would include the following features:

Sex offenders would be required to register with their local police service within 15 days of their release from custody. This means that police will have information on the location of sex offenders on probation or parole.

Individuals who the courts have determined have committed sex offences but who receive absolute or conditional discharges would also be required to register.

Police would have the power to arrest sex offenders who break this law. Police would be able to obtain warrants electronically on short notice.

This bill would also require convicted sex offenders residing in Ontario to register their names and addresses with the police in their communities and to update that information on an annual basis or any time their address changes. This means that Ontario will be the first province to give police the ability to track the whereabouts of sex offenders. The information would be placed in a sex offender registry maintained by the Ontario Provincial Police and would be accessible to local police services.

The provincial government, under regulations pursuant to the Community Safety Act, has already given local police services the authority to disclose the names of sex offenders to protect the public. The sex offender registry is one way of assuring that local police become aware of sex offenders who may move into their communities.

When this legislation was first introduced last spring, we were still hopeful that the federal Liberal government

would create a national sex offender registry providing protection for all Canadians. Since it is now clear that the federal government will not accept its responsibility in this matter, Ontario will do what is right and act to protect its citizens.

The proposed sex offender registry legislation would continue to be known as Christopher's Law in memory of Christopher Stephenson, an 11-year-old boy abducted and brutally murdered by a convicted pedophile who was on federal parole when he committed this crime.

I'm also pleased at this time to advise the House that Anna and Jim Stephenson are with us today in the gallery. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that others may be spared the fate of their son, and I thank them for their efforts and their support. Also in the gallery is Wendy Carroll, who is also an advocate for victims. I thank all three for being here today.

This government is committed to making Ontario a safer place. Christopher's Law would contribute to that goal, which I believe is a goal shared by the members of this Legislature. It would not only send a clear message to those who would prey unto the vulnerable members of our society but also honour Christopher Stephenson and others who have been victimized by sex predators.

1400

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I'd like to respond to the announcement by the minister responsible for children. The minister would like us to see this as a great leap forward, but it is indicative of a timid and half-hearted commitment to the welfare of children when we have one small step forward today on top of four steps back.

Let's look at it directly. There's an announcement of \$7 million when in fact the need was identified over two years ago as being \$13 million for the special services at home program; \$4 million for child treatment centres that have already been cut back, that have been languishing for years, unable to respond to the increased needs of the deinstitutionalization of families.

As we look at the pilot projects this government talks about, committing itself to today, we can only contrast that with the findings of the Fraser Mustard-McCain report last year. Everyone in this House knows that we have information today that could make a substantial difference in the lives of all the children of this province. Instead, special-needs families have to beg all over the place, as they have in this House in the last number of weeks, for the services just to recognize their obvious and ostensible needs.

Minister, we haven't heard enough from you about the well-being of children, because that should be front and centre of your government's agenda. Instead, we have sidebar announcements. There's \$106 million that has been cut from special-needs funding in this province for education. You should be advocating for that money. Those families are advocating, the selfsame families that

made use of that health care money that you're announcing today. In fact, you should be advocating for a co-ordinated system so that those families—you so aptly remarked on their courage and their struggle for what most parents in this province can take for granted. Instead, Minister, what they want from you is to see that they don't get penalized by community and social—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order, please. Member, continue.

Mr Kennedy: —these families receive enough understanding from the government, through you, Minister, so that they don't get penalized going from one ministry to the other as they try to get the basic essentials for their children, because it's simply not happening.

A member opposite asked for a commitment on the part of the Liberals. We made a commitment of \$15 million to the special services at home funding two years ago. Minister, the need is greater today. What they need to hear from you, loudly and clearly and on a frequent basis, is what those needs are. Frankly, taking the money away that we've taken from children in this province, the money you've cut from social services, millions and billions of dollars off the plates of poor children, simply doesn't square with the little bit of sprinkling you've done today. We welcome it, but we want a lot more for our province's children.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I will be responding to the Solicitor General's introduction of his bill. I want to tell him in a solemn way that I stand to respond inasmuch to the bill itself called Christopher's Law. I want to express to the family my personal prayers and sympathies. I would also extend them from the caucus and indeed I would feel free to say to the family from the entire House how saddened we were with this news. I did not personally know the family, but any such loss is a tragedy in our province today.

I speak also in favour of the bill to let the minister know that any law that can protect our children and any law that speaks to the goodness of our population is accepted on this side.

I want to also indicate to you that it's a good signal to the police and to the investigators who are involved in these cases, to give them the ammunition they need to wipe out this tragedy that's happening in our province.

With those words spoken, I would offer to you a hand out, as I promised to do. My hand out to you is a bill that was just offered to us by the member from Sudbury to discuss and to clearly indicate our commitment as well that the Highway Traffic Act, section 41, be amended, and we ask for your support in ensuring that children under 18 years of age are protected to a degree that I know you feel as well.

In our discussions, I did point out, Solicitor General, that 1995 is a long time ago when it comes to putting these kinds of bills on the books; 1995 required action

then. I would challenge all of us in this House that when these types of bills are available we do nothing else but expedite their passage and that we do nothing else but put the needs of Ontario children first and that we do nothing else but ensure that the population of Ontario understands very clearly that we are acting in their best interests.

Finally, I would also suggest and respectfully ask of the government to stop the fed-bashing, to stop blaming the federal government for inaction. It's time for us to hold our hand out and make this country better than what we already know it is.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): To the minister responsible for children's issues, this is a welcome announcement in that anything that makes the lives of these children better is to be welcomed, but it's not nearly enough and the minister knows that. In a government that has done so much to hurt children, this is a drop in the bucket. This minister has such a pathetic reputation for advocating for children within the government that children continue to be put at risk, and we've got a Premier who thinks child poverty statistics are hogwash.

There are still lots of children with special needs who can't get their needs met in the classroom because of your cuts to educational assistants. Look at their long-term-care regulations that limit care to two hours a day and take away any flexibility that community care access centres might have in addressing real needs. Children are suffering in a major way from this decision. Your welfare cuts are hurting children in a major way. Your recent cut to child care puts another 8,500 child care spaces at risk in Toronto alone, and you've abandoned your promise to expand child care as part of implementing the Fraser Mustard report. Your gutting of rent control means families are spending more than \$1,000 more in rent, money they could be spending on their children.

Minister, you made this announcement today. It's time that you stood up and defended your actions and answered the tough questions we're asking you about these issues, instead of continually handing them off to other ministries. Shame on you, Minister. I hope the next time we address some of these very serious problems, you will take the opportunity to tell us what you, as the children's advocate, are going to be doing about it.

SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The New Democratic Party caucus is eager to see the Solicitor General's bill go to second reading and out to committee so that we can work with this bill and make it the best possible piece of legislation that could exist within the limited context of what it does.

I share the Solicitor General's disappointment that the federal government did not embark on this exercise. It would be more appropriately done by the federal

government, which has supervision of the Criminal Code and of records, and would provide that provincial database, but in the absence of their action, I submit it's entirely appropriate that this province, or any other for that matter, embark in this direction.

This is but one of the many recommendations made by the jury in the coroner's inquest into the horrible murder of the young boy over 10 years ago now. I can't begin to imagine the pain that Christopher's parents and other family members and his friends must continue to feel, but I can applaud the incredible courage they demonstrate, by struggling and advocating and trying over the course of more than a decade now to ensure that the incredible tragedy that young boy was subjected to can perhaps be alleviated.

Is the registry the only answer? Of course not. But as you read the jury's recommendations—and my copy is dog-eared and tattered—with each reading, you say, "My God, what if?" or, "If only." If this registry can save but one child, it will be a success.

Solicitor General, you are well aware of my private member's bill, Bill 9, which is a response to yet another of the recommendations made by the jury that involves police records checks. The bill is still before the committee. I'm pleased that the justice committee has undertaken to continue to examine the bill, to perhaps flesh it out and make it more effective than it would be were it passed in its present form.

As a community, let's respond not just to the proposition of sexual offender registries. You know the shortcomings here. They are not faults, they are shortcomings, because inherently in the proposition there are shortcomings. Let's try to flesh this out. The government has made a commitment to a process regarding volunteer screening. Our committee is just beginning to understand the incredible responsibility that involves, because of the huge number of volunteers who have control over and access to youngsters. Let's begin working on that as well.

Let's make this part of a broad-based package to protect kids in our communities across this province, to set models for other provinces, and to give the cops the tools and resources they need to apprehend predators promptly. And let's give the courts the resources to make sure that predators are dealt with appropriately, so that the community remains safe from them.

1410

FOOD DRIVE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I rise on the following point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday I wrote to you about establishing food receptacles in this building for the collection of food bank donations. In my letter I requested that we promote food drives in this building and in our other public buildings, as has been done in the past, especially at key times of the year such as Christmas, Easter and Thanksgiving. This is a matter that falls under your direct authority.

This morning I met with representatives from food banks to facilitate a generous donation of grocery gift certificates and boxes of non-perishable food from the United Food and Commercial Workers. Also, you will know that this morning we defeated what I believe was a very mean-spirited bill that besmirched our food banks at a time when poverty, hunger and homelessness have grown alarmingly in Ontario.

By defeating the motion, this House clearly expressed its support for our food banks. We should now put our money where our mouths are or, more aptly, put food receptacles where our votes are.

Speaker, my point of order is to seek your speedy approval for placing food-collection bins at Queen's Park and in other government buildings so that we can have such a program operating in time for the coming holiday season. I ask for your ruling on this matter.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member will know it's not a point of order, but I would definitely like to meet with the member and assist in any way possible in helping in the endeavour he talks about. I would look forward to doing that and to working with the member.

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent for a member of each party to talk about international Human Rights Day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous agreement? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Johns: First of all, may I say to the Stephensons that it's certainly an honour to have them in the Legislature. I know they have done some incredible work for the children of Ontario.

Friday, December 10, 1999, marks the 51st anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is a landmark document recognizing the dignity and inherent rights of people.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was a history-making document. It was signed just three years after the end of the Second World War, the bloodiest conflict in human history, in which some elements of humanity descended to the worst and most wretched abuses of basic human rights. The declaration has proven to be a model for a wide variety of human rights protection here in Canada and around the world.

Human rights spring from our desire for fairness and respect. This government values Ontario's diversity and encourages equal opportunity for all citizens of this province. We believe that job quotas are a poor instrument to advance the cause of equal opportunity. Instead, we believe in a society that embraces merit and rewards individual achievement.

Through partnerships with organizations, employers and employees, we can make the workplace and society

inclusive. As individuals from different backgrounds, we expect to coexist peacefully, we expect to be treated justly by government and we expect to be free from discrimination based on our race.

Ontario has played a defining role in the history of human rights in this country. The Ontario Human Rights Commission was established in 1962, making Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to establish a human rights code and a commission of its own.

Since then, the province and legislators have not looked back. The challenge of ensuring that all members of society are fully valued for their talent and contributions has made Ontario a key player in defining human rights in this country. We continue to support the Ontario Human Rights Commission in its ongoing efforts.

Over the past two years, the commission has made changes to improve its ability to deliver human rights protection in an effective and a timely way. These changes are yielding exceptional results, resolving more than 70% of the complaints going to mediation, usually within six months.

The former Supreme Court Justice Gérard La Forest recently observed that mediation has been used successfully in Ontario and it is allowing the Ontario Human Rights Commission to deal with complaints far more quickly and effectively.

These are truly remarkable achievements, and I'm proud of the work that the Ontario Human Rights Commission has done.

The anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights represents an important challenge for the world. All Ontarians can take pride in our accomplishments in the field of human rights, but we must not become complacent. We must continue to foster a climate of improving understanding and mutual respect between all people.

We must encourage efforts to create a more just and equitable society, a society that will provide equal opportunities to all its members for generations to come, a society that treats all its members equally in an ideal that all fair-minded people share. We're not yet there and we have progress that needs to be made.

As we approach the millennium, we must be vigilant in our efforts to protect human rights. It is our duty to educate future generations to understand that in the words of the declaration, "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world."

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): In 1948, world governments committed themselves to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That was 51 years ago.

Human rights are God-given. Civil rights are man-given. Since the declaration of Human Rights Day, many speeches have been made and more will be made. It might be a significant signal in identifying a day on which we can pause and pontificate about the horrors and

abuses of individuals, and sometimes talk about our achievements, but failure to do something about this is a travesty in its own right.

Responsibility for the protection of human rights rests primarily with governments. However, every individual and organization of society must strive to promote respect for human rights and freedoms.

We, as parliamentarians, are human rights advocates of the highest order. We are assembled to make laws to protect the rights of others, whether they are business people or homeless. We abdicate our responsibility when we fail to protect their rights.

The increase of homelessness on the streets of Ontario's major cities is indicative of the failure of governments to address one of humans' basic needs, and that is housing.

Home is a place to go when you are whipped, down and out, disillusioned and discouraged. There are far too many in our society who are not given the support that is needed. Sometimes, government policies deprive people of access to affordable housing.

The high rate of functional illiteracy among our First Nation and francophone communities stands as an embarrassment to a nation that brags of its wealth. As we move forward in a time of advanced technology, millions of our people in our province and in our country will be left out due to their lack of the basic skills to read and write.

We continue to see organized efforts to deny foreign-trained professionals access to their trades and professions. Such denial robs the dignity of individuals to provide for themselves, their families and, very important, to the country as a whole.

1420

The Ontario Human Rights Commission continues to ineffectively address the needs of those individuals whose rights have been violated. The lack of adequate resources gives way to the perpetrators to continue their abuse. As I listen to the minister, I know that she is well-intended, but I'd ask her to visit the human rights again and see people who are waiting four, five, six, seven years for things to be addressed. She shakes her head and, I tell you, my daughter is one of those that is so. I say that without directly pointing fingers at any government, but the institution itself lacks the clout and the ability to carry out an effective way of addressing human rights.

We have thousands of francophones in our province and a country that recognizes English and French as its official languages. Yet in our capital there are over 120,000 French-speaking Canadians for whom the provincial government has failed to protect these rights.

In the same city, the hospital restructuring commission decided to close the Montfort Hospital and deny the French-speaking community services in their own language. Subsequently, as you know, the court has struck down this decision. Alas, this government is in the process of appealing that decision, challenging the basic human rights of these citizens.

Ipperwash hangs over our heads as a disgraceful example of the handling of a peaceful demonstration that led to the death of Dudley George. The call for a public inquiry has been ignored by the government of the day. The silence of this government is deafening. As recently as this morning a debate was held in this House, and while members of the opposition spoke with deep emotion and compassion of the situation, appealing for a public inquiry, it was denied. Members of the government side were silent, except for one. The action today speaks loudly of the lack of commitment to human rights. I can hear what this government is saying. This speaks volumes of the government's disregard for basic human rights.

We watch with amazement as the democratic process erodes, as the government routinely restricts expressions of citizens of the province and duly elected members. Members who are given the authority to speak on behalf of their communities are denied their basic rights in this chamber. The lack of consultation limits the place, and the time in which members are allowed to put their constituents' viewpoints is curtailed. That is one of the most basic rights that is given in a democratic society.

Human rights are God-given and civil rights are man-given. The basic civil rights of literacy, housing, freedom of expression and freedom to receive care in this country's official languages are constantly denied and challenged.

A country, it is always said, is judged by the way it treats its people, especially those who are most disadvantaged and, my God, we've got them. We have them on the streets, homeless. We have those who are illiterate, who are unable to access decent jobs.

Let us leave a legacy as parliamentarians, as strong advocates for human rights.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I am proud to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus on yes, I suppose, a celebration of the Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, an expression at the time, perhaps, of a universal embrace of those principles. We as Canadians and as Ontarians are oh, so inclined to look around the world and point out those abuses of human rights and feel oh, so much better for having done so. At the same time, and by virtue of being able to do that, we often fail to identify those human rights violations occurring right here in our own communities and being perpetrated by our own governments and by institutions within our own society and culture.

At the same time, while we want to point out those abuses of human rights, we far too often neglect to intervene effectively or sufficiently to ensure that human rights are maintained not just in Ontario, not just in Canada, but across the world.

We're living in a time in the western countries, and very much here in Canada, like in the United States, where inequalities are growing in our communities and our nations, where the incredible gap between the very wealthiest and the huge, growing numbers of poor is growing at an incredibly and rapidly accelerating rate and

where the middle class is losing any sense of economic security because their future appears gloomier and gloomier. What's more, those who can benefit, celebrate; those who do benefit, rejoice in those increasing gaps, those increasing inequalities.

There's also increasing inequality among nations, with our so-called First World nations benefiting. It's inside of those First World nations that we're seeing those huger and huger gaps.

Let me explain this to you. One billion people, one billion of this earth's population, survive on less than the equivalent of one dollar a day. Another two billion people on this earth sustain themselves on less than the equivalent of \$750 a year. That's almost half the world's population that lives in the most desperate and cruel of conditions.

We like to look at them from afar and we watch CNN and perhaps we make the occasional contribution to the knock on the door as volunteers canvass for any number of relief funds. But we are in no way prepared to ensure that the incredible wealth—it is as well concentrated in the hands of so few here in Ontario and Canada—to ensure that some of that wealth, some significant portion of that wealth, is allocated to that half of the world's population that has no participation in the prosperity of that increasingly small and concentrated group.

For example, the top three Microsoft executives, three individuals together, as a trio, control more wealth than the world's 50 poorest nations. Three individuals control more wealth than 50 of the world's poorest nations. They have no interest in accepting any responsibility for the fact that in no small part their incredible wealth is a result of the incredible poverty and deprivation of so much of the world's population.

I found it interesting that it was a rather conservative American personality, Donald Trump, a very wealthy man, who made the observation and then the proposal that perhaps the response to the debt isn't to call upon the poorest people in your community or society to pay it down, it isn't to call upon working women and men. I'll tell you what Donald Trump's proposition was: Were there a one-time-only tax on the wealth of the richest Americans, those Americans who have net assets in excess of \$10 million, excluding their family home—you're talking about a very elite group of people—in other words, their net assets, excluding their family home, exceed \$10 million. Were these very wealthy Americans to pay a one-time-only flat tax of 14.25%, the American debt of trillions of dollars would be eliminated.

It took Donald Trump to understand that the debt has also guaranteed the prosperity of some of the very wealthiest and richest people in the American community, in the American nation, in their society, and I dare say in ours as well.

1430

We can speak with as much aloofness and, my goodness, self-accomplishment as we wish about human rights. We can take pride in signing the petitions. We can take pride in rising on a day like today and crying out for

human rights nationally and internationally. But it takes more than mere words, and that's one thing the world has learned since the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: that it requires far more than words.

If we really want to have a conversation about not just protecting but, for so many, building human rights in the first instance, we have also got to talk about the incredible inequities suffered by so many internationally, nationally and indeed here in the province of Ontario, provincially.

At the end of the day, the guiding light seems to be the expansion of financial markets. At the end of the day, the primary driver of policy seems to be what's in the interests of corporations, increasingly those huge multinational corporations whose sole and primary interest and function is to create profits and which, by virtue of their nature, have no heart and have no soul. This drive to sustain corporate profits and to facilitate and accommodate multinational corporations brings with it huge new inequities and huge new breaches of human rights nationally and internationally.

Governments which preach against governments, governments which preach against governance, and governments which abandon democratic principles and practices inherently deny human rights but also deny their capacity to control and regulate so that better equities are achieved as compared to the incredible inequities that we suffer from now.

The politicians join in the profit motive. They talk about how the market will prevail, how the market will drive our economy—this has got to be said—how the market will create and provide for access by so many more to the good things that are there. Tell that to the people in Toronto and other cities of this province who increasingly find themselves homeless because rents are escalating beyond their capacity, and where the private sector, where the corporate sector, where the for-profit sector has no interest and no capacity to provide housing for low-income and other poor persons. Governments now insist that the market conditions must prevail and that they will serve the community.

Let me speak to you about what rural workers in Brazil, where they struggle against not just homelessness but against landlessness, say. They say that the state and the government may very well be the cage that holds the citizens but we must expand the floor of the cage so that we can all fit inside, because roaming outside of that cage are tigers. Those tigers are those huge corporations. So in fact those people who advocate less state, less governance, less government, are advocating for throwing the workers and the vulnerable and plain folk out of the cage to the tigers.

Here in this House we hear members protesting observations made by so many others, telling us that poverty among children is but a fiction, telling us that it's good to punish the poor, that we should give more to the very rich, the richest of the rich, while taking away those modest services that we all need in order to prosper as a community and as a society.

Here in the province of Ontario we still suffer from, and witness far too often, the blackness and bleakness of anti-Semitism. We see the growth of hate movements, of the neo-Nazi movements, and we see their expressions of anti-Semitism; we see the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues. We witness and suffer racism. We as Canadians want to be oh, so polite and insist that we're not really racist, but racism still permeates so many of our institutions and it indeed infects so many of our own lives.

This government recently acknowledged the rights of same-sex partners but didn't do it out of any celebration of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It did it because it was forced to by the courts of this province and this country.

We still see women suffering inequities in the workplace, suffering from continual violence by men; and their children. We see governments abandoning philosophies of employment equity, philosophies and principles that would protect those people who have been denied access to workplaces, women and members of minorities and the disabled. We see governments like this one abandoning those policies so that the doors, once again, are locked, bolted and barred to those people in our workplaces.

Let's not forget this province was found to be in violation of the UN's International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. I put to you that the human rights agenda here in Ontario has been set back by decades, and the UN's observer here noted that it has been done through legislation and practice by this government of Ontario.

Today this House was compelled to debate a bill that would punish food banks, those communities of volunteers that do their best to try to ensure that their hungry and impoverished neighbours are fed. Huge corporations, and governments which serve only them, don't respect, nor do they defend, nor do they understand or acknowledge human rights.

Child labour: The reality is that if child labour were legal here in Ontario, corporations would be utilizing it, and the proof is in the pudding because in places where it is legal they are forcing children to work for menial wages.

Environmental rights: If large corporations could get away with pouring gallons upon gallons of toxic waste into our lakes and rivers or into our air here in Ontario, they would, and they are, and the proof is in the pudding because in places where they can, they do. We need governments and politicians who will fight for the needs and the rights of average citizens, working people, their parents, retirees, for children and students, to protect all of us from the tigers.

We speak of human rights, yet this Legislature has ignored the right of adult adoptees to have access to birth information. Our colleague Marilyn Churley presented a bill in the last Parliament, and I'm confident she will pursue in this Parliament that same agenda. As we celebrate the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights,

please let this government make a commitment to ensure the human rights of those adult adoptees in Ontario who do not have the right, but should, and must, to access their birth records.

Promoting human rights is about valuing each person in our society, each person in this global community. To value a person, we have to provide an environment where every person, whether vulnerable or very powerful, can thrive to the best of his or her abilities. It means providing supports to ensure that she or he can meet the demands placed upon them.

Let's celebrate the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let's celebrate the martyrdom and lives and courage and sacrifice of—I'll name but two—Leonard Peltier, from the American Indian Movement, who remains imprisoned on trumped-up charges. Let's celebrate the sacrifice and the courage of Mordechai Vanunu who, for over 10 years, endured solitary confinement after being abducted and tried secretly in Israel for disclosing plans and the de facto nuclear weapons development there.

Let's celebrate these people and understand that our commitment to human rights has to include a commitment to them and to others like them. It also has to include a commitment to each and every one in our families and in our own communities. It means not just speaking of human rights but ensuring them. It means calling upon those to make sacrifices to give effect to it.

1440

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Attorney General.

The Attorney General has a very important role as our senior legal official in the province. The minister will know that this morning a bill I had before the Legislature, that would have required the establishment of a public inquiry into the events around Ipperwash, to begin when all legal matters were dealt with, was rejected by the government. The government said, at the time, that it was their position that this bill should not be before the House because of section 23. I gather this is a legal opinion from you, Attorney General.

Section 23 says it shouldn't be "where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding." Minister, my question is: You have looked at the bill. I assume it was your legal opinion that allowed the caucus to reach this view. Is it your legal opinion that proceeding with my bill would create real and substantial danger of prejudice?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As was pointed out by the government whip, the deputy House leader, who spoke to the private member's bill—I might add that this

was a private member's bill brought by the member opposite. It was not a bill brought forward by a party or the official opposition or by the government. It was a private member's bill that was dealt with by all members, who vote according to their view of what their vote ought to be on the bill. Indeed, there was a division on the two private members' bills today, in which some members of different parties voted different ways on different bills, which is the right and privilege of members of this Legislative Assembly as the member opposite well knows.

The standing order to which the member makes reference refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination. Indeed, that's the essence of the difficulty with the bill. There is a very serious criminal appeal and cross-appeal reserved by the highest court in this province and currently under consideration by that court, the Ontario Court of Appeal.

Mr Phillips: The minister without portfolio, Mr Klees, said, "I rise on behalf of my colleagues on this side of the House to say that the government has in fact decided not to debate this bill."

I want to ask you again, Minister, because the reason the government has decided not to proceed with this bill and to debate it is a very serious legal matter, and I want you, as our senior legal official in the province of Ontario, to listen to this question very carefully. Have you and your officials reviewed the bill and have you concluded, as you indicated earlier, that it is in contravention of this section 23 of the standing orders and that my bill would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceedings? Is that, Mr Attorney General, your view and your department's view?

Hon Mr Flaherty: As the member knows, or I believe he knows, the principle involved here is a very serious one and requires members of the Legislative Assembly, I would suggest with respect, to exercise caution in what we say or don't say about matters that are sub judice, matters that are before the courts.

The reason for that is that the Legislature ought not to be seen, and we as members ought not to be seen, and the Attorney General ought not to be seen, as trying to influence in any way proceedings that are before our impartial tribunals and certainly before the judicial branch of government. I think that principle is fundamental and I'm sure—I hope—it's shared by the member opposite.

We have been clear and consistent. We will only consider other options after matters before the courts have been exhausted. That has been the position of the government throughout and it remains the position of the government.

Mr Phillips: Your cabinet colleague today got up and told the people of Ontario that you were not going to even debate the bill because in the government's legal opinion it violated section 23 of the standing orders. I remind you that that says it would be the government's opinion that it would "create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

You have a very unique position. You have a difficult and important one. You have to uphold the law. I assume, Minister, and tell me if I'm wrong, that you looked at the bill, that your officials looked at this bill, that it must have been your legal advice that the caucus and the cabinet sought. I say to you again, is it your legal opinion that this bill constitutes "real and substantial danger of prejudice" and will you agree to table the legal opinion you based that decision on?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I repeat to the member and to all members of the House that there's a very important principle involved when one is dealing with matters that are before either our courts or our tribunals. The member's bill referred to what might happen in the future. There are several civil proceedings and a major appeal and cross-appeal involving the liberty of the subject before the courts of Ontario, with a criminal proceeding having been argued and under consideration right now by the Ontario Court of Appeal judges, who heard the appeal.

We should show respect for that branch of government. We should give them the opportunity to express their views about the issues that are before them. That is why the standing order refers to matters, to issues that are pending in a court before a judge. The standing order, in my view, is there for good reason: as guidance for all of us in this place.

Mr Phillips: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: He is misleading the House.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I withdraw that comment, but—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Take your seat. I'm going to listen to the point of order and I would appreciate if the government members do not shout, "That's not a point of order." I will be the one who will decide that.

Mr Phillips: This matter is of extreme importance, and the Attorney General will want to tell the people of Ontario that it says matters may be ruled out of order, and I'll quote the entire section:

"Refers to any matter that is the subject of a proceeding

"(i) that is pending in a court or before a judge for judicial determination, or

"(ii) that is before any quasi-judicial body constituted by the House or by or under the authority of an act of the Legislature,

"where it is shown to the satisfaction of the Speaker that further reference would create a real and substantial danger of prejudice to the proceeding."

I don't believe the Attorney General can ever prove that.

1450

The Speaker: The members will know that this Speaker was not asked to rule on a point of order on that. Members can answer in private members' hour however they choose. I did not rule the bill out of order, however.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Very briefly, I would just refer you to your comments yesterday about the clock, what it means to the third party and what just happened.

The Speaker: Yes, I will try to move up very quickly. This time I will stop the clock.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If the opposition chooses to use part of the question period to enter into debate by raising points of order, then the clock should continue to run, in our opinion.

The Speaker: I thank the government House leader. I will decide when the clock runs and when it does not and I will stop it when I see fit.

Applause.

The Speaker: I appreciate the members clapping in support of a ruling. I also know there will be occasions when they won't be happy, and we don't want any booing in here, so I would appreciate it if all members wouldn't clap on my ruling, especially since sometimes there may be no clapping on my ruling whatsoever.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I asked your predecessor a question last year, last fall, when the Provincial Auditor exposed probably the most scathing report, over the now infamous Andersen Consulting contract, in the history of the provincial government. At that time, when we asked this predecessor of yours the question, she acknowledged in this House: "We've certainly acknowledged that the management of this contract left much to be desired. It's one of the reasons why we have the third party review in, to help supplement recommendations from the auditor so we can ensure the taxpayers' money is indeed protected."

Yesterday at committee the Provincial Auditor once again reported on all of the events to date and gave you yet another review. We'd like to ask this minister today, agreeing that you had a bomb dropped in your lap by your predecessor, and the scathing report, what have you done to date to acknowledge that this contract should have been scrapped when we suggested it?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I'm certainly aware of the review that the Provincial Auditor conducted and his report of November 1998. The report that he issued this morning I think simply reiterates the concerns he raised in November 1998.

Like every other single member of this place, I was extremely angry when I saw that report last year. I was not happy then; I'm not happy now. My predecessor said, when commenting on the auditor's report last year, that the early mismanagement of the project was unacceptable, and I agreed.

We have responded to many of the auditor's recommendations. We conducted a third party review by Mr Hession, with Hickling, Lewis and Brod, who confirmed that there are hundreds of millions of dollars of benefits to the taxpayers that will accrue as a result of the project. We've improved the financial management. We've improved the contract compliance. We've made some strategic organizational changes and put an assistant deputy minister in charge of the project. We've strengthened project governance. I have a team of three ADMs leading up our efforts in this regard.

We want to build a better welfare system—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister's time is up.

Mrs Pupatello: I wonder if this minister has been angry for six months, because that's how long you've been the minister, and the third party review came in in February of this year. That means before you were even named the minister for this position, the third party review was in.

That third party review said it is in substantial agreement with the findings of the Provincial Auditor. So you had the review in last February. You assumed your post this past summer. You've had it in your lap, apparently angry, for six months and you have done nothing.

The auditor this morning at committee said that the ministry has done nothing to improve the negotiated deal. That third party review told you that what we said in the House a year ago was true: \$180 million was the minimum. There are no caps. The expenses can go through the roof and you cannot control them. All of those elements should have been addressed.

Minister, don't tell me you've been angry for six months. Your ministry has done nothing. I want to know whether it is incompetence or whether you just continue to pay the private sector for what your own ministry could have been doing on its own.

Hon Mr Baird: I want to respond to the last comment the member opposite made, that the ministry could simply have undertaken this initiative on its own. We waited 10 years for the government of Ontario to take some action on a welfare system that was out of control, and nothing happened. Absolutely nothing happened. We inherited a welfare system that was out of control, a welfare system with more than a million people on it, a welfare system that was so out of control we found 3,000 people in jail collecting welfare.

For the member opposite to stand in her place and criticize this government's attempts to clean up an out-of-control system astonishes me. The only welfare reform policy that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party put forward in the last election campaign was to jack up the welfare rates and return to the money-for-nothing policies. This government won't go back. We won't turn back the clock.

Mrs Pupatello: Let's give the House the facts from this morning's committee meeting. What the Provincial Auditor told us is that you, defender of the taxpayer, paid

Andersen Consulting \$55 million out of your \$66 million saved. You took five-sixths of your money and handed it to the private sector. Do not come in here like you're some kind of hero for taxpayers. You handed over \$55 million to a private company after the Provincial Auditor told you that that was an inappropriate contract.

We are asking this minister again: Will you break this contract with Andersen? It is the right thing to do for Ontario taxpayers.

Hon Mr Baird: Even the Provincial Auditor hasn't said that we break the contract. What we did was bring in outside experts to help us get control of a welfare system that was out of control, a system with more than a \$6-billion budget and with antiquated technology that belonged in a museum.

As the member opposite has said, in the very early stages of this process the government, through the help of the firm we are working with, has been able to save \$66 million. Where did we save this money? We brought in this company, and they have been helping us root out fraud and abuse. We found one person on social assistance who had a gold credit card and who was making monthly payments in excess of the welfare benefit.

This government took action. We brought in outside expertise to help us get control of welfare fraud and to help us get control of welfare abuse. Your party was simply not prepared to do anything. To sit by and do nothing, to us, was simply not an option.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It's not a surprise that my question is also for the Minister of Community and Social Services.

I want to quote from the Provincial Auditor's follow-up report on the continuing corporate rip-off of Andersen Consulting. This is what he says December 3, 1999, "In light of the significant payments already made to Andersen Consulting at rates which the ministry cannot control, the delays in the completion of the deliverables and our concerns about the workings of the cost and benefit pools, we continue to question the achievement of value for money for the taxpayers." That's what he says. He points out that the rip-off is getting worse.

Let me give you one example: computer inputting. Your own employees can do computer inputting for \$28 an hour. You pay Andersen \$85 an hour. Is that what you call value for money? You give Andersen Consulting \$85 an hour for computer inputting when your own employees can do it for \$28?

Hon Mr Baird: I'm not going to defend the early mismanagement of this project, which I believe was unacceptable. The member opposite is obviously prepared to defend the unacceptable welfare regime that he and his party left in place. The recent audit of the Provincial Auditor is just an exchange of letters and phone calls. There has not been a follow-up audit to his 1998 report.

Our motive is to build a better welfare system, to try to work to ensure that the project is successfully completed

and that it continues to save the taxpayers money. We want to ensure the project is completed on time. We want to ensure the project is completed on budget. We do, of course, want to also seek to renegotiate rates. That's an objective of this government as we finish the first third of this part of the project.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

1500

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Minister, it's the continuing gross mismanagement under your leadership that we're worried about.

For goodness' sake, your government has now given a gift—a gift—of \$58.5 million to Andersen Consulting. The auditor made it clear in his report again this morning that Andersen has been paid for work that has nothing, absolutely nothing, to do with your business projects. He made it clear again this morning that the costs Andersen is claiming are grossly inflated because of the high hourly billing rate. The auditor made it clear again this morning that you are under no obligation, no contractual obligation whatsoever, to pay Andersen one cent until the benefits of the project exceed the costs; and they never have.

You have been made aware by your deputy of the auditor's concerns several times. Your deputy made it clear this morning that you have been briefed about these concerns on a number of occasions, and you've done nothing. Are you now prepared to stop any further payments to Andersen Consulting? Are you prepared to do something?

Hon Mr Baird: In the province of Ontario, we don't pay Andersen Consulting one single cent unless a benefit is accrued to the taxpayer. If the member opposite wasn't so selective in her use of the facts, she might have a point, but she is selective with the facts.

An independent assessment was done by Ray Hession and Hickling Lewis Brod. They conducted an independent review, and this independent review said that more than \$66 million of benefit to the taxpayers has already been accrued.

They came in and helped us fix the process. I want to tell you what some of them did. We found one person with a gold credit card who was making monthly payments that exceeded their welfare cheque. We found a person collecting welfare for eight years who was receiving unemployment benefits because they had lost their job while on welfare—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Member take his seat. Order.

Hon Mr Baird: Working with our private sector partners, who are helping us develop a process and technology, we found a person collecting welfare who had a line of credit at a local hardware store. This welfare recipient was charging building supplies. Why? Because he needed them for his job.

We weren't going to sit back and wait two or three years to implement their anti-fraud measures. No fraud is acceptable for this government, and when we find fraud,

with the help of Andersen Consulting, we're going to stamp it out.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): You and your government are tough on what you call welfare fraud, but when it comes to corporate fraud it's A-OK, anything goes, you write them a blank cheque.

You should have been at the committee this morning, because your deputy minister confirmed exactly what Mr Peters, the Provincial Auditor, had to say, and that is that you have paid out \$58.8 million to Andersen Consulting when your contractual obligations required you to pay not one penny. Your largesse to Andersen Consulting has been remarkable. Andersen Consulting has robbed the treasury of Ontario and you're driving the getaway car. When are you going to put a stop to the corporate fraud, the corporate theft that Andersen Consulting is engaging in and return these monies back to the public coffers?

Hon Mr Baird: I don't share the comments of the member opposite.

What our independent assessment done by Hickling Lewis Brod and Ray Hession has clearly said is that more than \$66 million of benefit has already accrued to the taxpayers of Ontario. By the time we're through with this project, we'll be able to save the taxpayers more than \$200 million a year. I think that's good news.

We brought these people in to try to help us clean up the mess that you left us, a system that was so out of control that we had more than 3,000 people in jail collecting welfare; a system that was so out of control, welfare fraud was everywhere, welfare abuse was everywhere. The worst thing about it was that your government, your caucus, your cabinet weren't prepared to do one single thing about it. Well, this government is taking some actions to clean up the mess we inherited from you.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is for the Acting Premier, but I just want to say that Andersen Consulting certainly has a friend in your government.

It is one year to the day since the Kyle Martyn coroner's inquest made their recommendations regarding hospital emergency wards in this province. I just want to recount what has happened in one year. This week we see 23 of 25 hospitals in Toronto turning ambulances away. The number of hours emergency wards closed their doors to ambulances was 14 times higher in October of this year than in October 1995, a jump from 73 hours to 994 hours over that time period.

One year since those recommendations came down, how do you justify a situation that is getting worse by the day? How do you justify the fact that in hospital after hospital emergency wards are shut down or on redirect?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I think everyone in this House and everyone in the province is concerned about any issue

related to the delivery of health care in Ontario. Emergency room pressures are not a new issue to this province. Numerous examples exist of this happening under previous governments and I could go through the headlines that were published in both opposition parties' term of government.

Last year our government established an emergency services working group in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association. Our government has invested more than \$300 million to address the specific question of emergency room pressures. The government is implementing all 25 recommendations of the working group in partnership with the Ontario Hospital Association, recommendations such as \$75 million more for hospital emergency room funding. I could go on at some length, but I know the member has some more questions.

Mr Hampton: Yes, I do have a supplementary question and it involves this: When you talk to nurses out there, they will tell you that the money you say you've allocated is not nearly enough to deal with the situation your government created through your cuts.

Think about it: One in four ambulances in Hamilton is being turned away from hospital emergency wards. The Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital turned away ambulances every other day so far this month, and they had never closed their doors before this summer. You say you're doing something, but in hospital after hospital, community after community across this province, the situation is actually getting worse despite what you say you're doing.

The only response I can see is your Bill 23, which would give the Minister of Health almost unilateral powers to close hospitals or to order hospital services. Can you give us a guarantee that you're going to use Bill 23, an incredible power for the Minister of Health, to reopen the beds you've closed, to go out there—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member's time is up.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned, I think everyone is concerned about delivery of health care right across Canada, and in particular your example of the problems in the emergency rooms. This government has invested substantial resources, working with our partners, the Ontario Hospital Association, and working with the nurses' union. They've set up a task force. They've made recommendations. We've accepted all of their recommendations and are in the process of implementing them. We're looking for solutions that will help the people of Ontario access health care when they need it and where they need it and there have been some early signs of positive results.

Yes, there is more work to be done and I know the Minister of Health will continue to work with our partners who deliver these services to make sure that Ontarians get the health care we need and deserve.

1510

HIGHWAY 407

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Two weeks before the spring election call your government announced the sale of Highway 407 to a private consortium. We have asked your government to make the details of that sale public, but you continually refuse to do so. Well, eight months later it's now clear why. The users of the 407 are simply being gouged; 99 years of toll charges, skyrocketing fees, administrative fees higher than bank charges, unsuspecting motorists losing their licences, no accountability and no due process. Worse still, the government is acting as a Cadillac collection agency for the private consortium by collecting late toll charges for them and then adding on a \$30 administrative fee on top of that.

Minister, as your friend Al Leach, now a board member of the 407 consortium—nudge, nudge, wink, wink—might say, "This is a boondoggle." When will you end the shroud of secrecy surrounding this? Will you today release the details of the Highway 407 contract? The people deserve to know.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): In fact, there has been an FOI request on this and the ministry was ready to release it; however, under the due process set up under the system, there was an objection to this. It is being examined at this moment, and if it is cleared we will then continue to release the information.

Mr Gravelle: Minister, just five years ago in this House you stood here as transportation critic for your party and you condemned—and I will quote you: "... the absolutely scandalous conditions of the awarding of the Highway 407 contract and the fact that the public has absolutely no access to the information surrounding the awarding of a contract."

Interjections.

Mr Gravelle: That's what he said.

Ontarians today have a right to know what deal their government has made on their behalf, objection or no. They have a right to know why the government is giving the ETR consortium special treatment, and indeed you are. They have a right to know why Highway 407 tolls are the highest in North America and why this faceless consortium is victimizing motorists.

In 1994 you called these same conditions scandalous. Do you not agree that a deal that is so shrouded in secrecy, which allows motorists to be gouged for the next 99 years, is equally scandalous? Minister, do you not agree?

Hon Mr Turnbull: No, and I'll tell you the reason why. Quite simply, as I stated in my original response, we are in fact ready to release those details. There is an impediment. Somebody from the private sector has objected to the release, and these are the arrangements that were set up, I believe, by your government at the time, if I'm not mistaken. We're ready to move ahead.

The terms of the contract were the most carefully thought out decision of our government, which ensures—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Transportation take your seat. I can't hear the question when members are talking to each other across the floor and not listening to the answer.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Our process ensures that the road will be built out to the western extension and the east partial for the cost of half a billion dollars at no cost to the taxpayer. As far as the privatization is concerned, I want to tell you, sir, we got awfully good value for the taxpayers, something your government didn't know about.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Brian Coburn (Carleton-Gloucester): My question is for the minister responsible for children. Across Ontario there are children in constant need of medical attention and, as such, cannot participate in a normal childhood existence. Families who have children with multiple special needs find it difficult if not impossible to have their children participate in school or play. Some are dependent on medical technology, which puts further constraints on their lives.

Minister, I understand that earlier today you announced new government initiatives for children with multiple special needs. Could you please tell us exactly what this means for families across the province who require respite care?

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Carleton-Gloucester for this important question and to commend him for his representation of the interests of these children, not only in his riding but across the province.

I'm delighted to tell him that the announcement I made this morning was \$11 million in new funding for special-needs children. This includes \$7 million of additional respite care for families and caregivers with medically fragile and technologically dependent children who are being cared for at home.

Our government recognizes the enormous sacrifice and dedication that these families make, because these children require constant, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week care. There are about 1,700 of these families—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Answer.

Hon Mrs Marland:—and they require observation every single moment.

I will just say finally that it's \$3,500 per child and that's an additional—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr Coburn: We also recognize that families are tremendously dedicated in caring for their multiple-special-needs children, and this involves a great deal of time and energy from those families that are affected.

The announcement today of new funding for children's treatment centres in the new fiscal year as part of our government's overall special-needs initiative is

surely a welcome one. Could you please tell us how children using these centres across Ontario are going to benefit from this news.

Hon Mrs Marland: Children and youth across Ontario who use the children's treatment centres will benefit from this great news. It was \$4 million, in fact, that I announced this morning. That's a 7% increase to their Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care funding. The money will improve access to health care services for these special-needs children and their families.

The good thing that happened this morning was that Valerie Elliott Hyman, the chief executive officer of the Ontario Association of Children's Rehabilitation Services—

The Speaker: Answer.

Hon Mrs Marland:—was present and she said she was pleased and grateful to have this funding from our government.

It was kind of interesting when earlier today the Liberals said this was a sidebar announcement—

The Speaker: I'm sorry, the minister's time is up.

MILLENNIUM MEMENTO

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. We heard about the boondoggle in a prior ministry she was involved in. I want to talk to you about the current boondoggle you're helping with, and that's this Millennium Memento business.

You allowed these mementoes to go to all your schools and you also allowed, I guess, or encouraged people in the education community. But you'd be interested to know what the people who were consulted now say about this book: "Students can't see this as a positive gift," says Lindy Amato, "because they have to live with school cutbacks. It's a waste of taxpayers' money." Bill Reith says: "The priorities of this government are mixed up. I am not happy with my name being a part of this book." Today we had parents come in from around the province who say that you don't know what's happening in the real world, and one of them is a parent from Guelph who has raised \$3,000 to buy textbooks since the beginning of this year.

I want to ask you, as Minister of Education, do you not agree that the \$2.4 million that was wasted on this memento and the \$306,000 that's supposed to be spent to put it in school libraries would be better spent on textbooks in the schools that you're responsible for? Don't you agree?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I know the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation would like to answer this question.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): As the member opposite knows, these books came out of the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation. Let me read a letter that says:

"A secondary school teacher has approached one of the constituency offices. This teacher is going on a

teaching exchange to Australia and has requested that we supply him with materials unique to Ontario so that he can bring them to school with him when he teaches. He has requested supplies of 30 copies of My Ontario Millennium Memento book to bring back with him for distribution to the libraries in the area schools. He feels it would be an excellent opportunity for students from other sides of the globe to have a glimpse of life of students in Ontario."

This teacher is departing early in January. Guess who said that. Steve Peters. The EA for Steve Peters—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up. Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. Sorry, member, the clock is stopped. We'll wait till it's quiet. Member.

1520

Mr Kennedy: My supplementary is to the Minister of Education because, Minister, the question was to you. Do you not agree that the money spent on this, almost \$3 million, would be better spent on textbooks? For example, at a school like Alexander Graham Bell school in your riding—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Labour, come to order, please.

Mr Kennedy: Thank you, Mr Speaker. At Alexander Graham Bell school in Ajax, where the Minister of Education recently visited, she was made fully aware that teachers like Tim Ralph and Jackie Moro don't have the resources; they do not have the textbooks. The principal of Alexander Graham Bell school—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think it's unfair that at the back they're beating up Steve Peters and I think you should—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order. Member.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Niagara Falls, come to order. Thank you. The member's time was almost up, if he could wrap it up quickly, please.

Mr Kennedy: The point the minister fails to recognize is that teachers in her own riding, including the principal—Mr Ayott says he has \$9,000 to spend on books, 10% less than last year. Half the students in his school don't have textbooks. None can take them home. They have to share textbooks. There's a shortage of money for textbooks, Minister.

The Speaker: The member's time is up. Minister.

Hon Mrs Johns: I would just like to read another letter out and let me say that this one is not from the executive assistant of one of your members. This is from the outgoing chair of the Rainbow District School Board. He says:

"Just a note to advise you that after I spent 10 minutes on TV regarding My Ontario Millennium Memento, I

received all kinds of calls from citizens at large wanting a copy, contrary to the Liberal hoopla. So ignore the political MPP from Sudbury and his negative attitude. I reckon that the secondary teachers should also be ignored for using students in an effort to discredit the democratically elected government. So don't lose faith. There are many parents and kids who will enjoy the books in a few weeks ..."

Let me just remind the members opposite that this was a modest amount of money invested, less than \$1 a student, to make sure that the children of this province were able to recognize their hopes, their dreams, the future in 2020.

This government has put half a billion dollars into books—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up. Thank you very much. Stop the clock.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to seek unanimous consent to have Steve Peters ask a supplementary.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? I heard a "no." Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would you put five seconds back on. New question.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is to the Minister of Correctional Services. The Ministry of Correctional Services is in the process of restructuring its correctional system by replacing older and less efficient facilities with a system of new, larger, strategically located facilities based on modern and efficient building design and advanced technology. In fact, construction is underway in Penetanguishene to build one of these new facilities.

Recently our government announced to partner with the private sector to operate the superjail in my riding of Simcoe North. Minister, my constituents in Simcoe North would like to know why our government would consider partnering with the private sector to operate a correctional facility.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I know the member for Simcoe North has been quite interested in this particular subject, because of course we have one of the brand new facilities being constructed just outside of Penetang. I've been there myself to see how the construction is going, and I've heard from local tradespeople and local citizens around Penetang that that particular construction itself has been a tremendous boost to that economy in the area. I gather it's even difficult to find somebody to lay bricks or wire a facility because most of those trades are being employed in the construction of that facility to get it up to speed and in shape to be used.

The member speaks to how we will partner with the private sector. Yes, we have indeed proposed to try to see

if we can find a private sector partner to help us operate these facilities efficiently and effectively, because part of our commitment to Ontarians is to have a safe, efficient and secure facility. We'll challenge public and private operators both to do that.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the Minister of Correctional Services for that response. Minister, it's my understanding that our government has always kept the option open for public-private participation in correctional facilities. The former minister also said that privatization is possible in the future if a company can make a case that it could run jails more efficiently and with the same safety guards. Minister, when will the process begin for a public-private partnership with the Penetanguishene superjail?

Hon Mr Sampson: To the honourable member from Simcoe North, he should be aware, and I believe people who are watching today are quite aware, of the fact that public safety is our top priority in corrections. So we will maintain a focus, a very high and very dedicated focus, on public security and safety as we go through the process to help us determine whether there are indeed some private operators who may partner in one form or another with us to help us deliver on our commitment to Ontarians to have a safe and secure facility. That's safe and secure for those who are working inside the institution as well as those who live in and around the particular institutions across this province.

We'll also be challenging them, whether they be private operators or public operators or some combination thereof, to deliver on all the objectives we have in our ministry, which are safe, secure, effective and efficient institutions. I believe Ontarians are expecting that from us.

ONTARIO LOTTERY CORP

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Given that in the Sault Star of Saturday your director of communications for the OLC, the Ontario Lottery Corp, said that the headquarters of the new amalgamated Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp will be in Toronto, and given that you understand the importance of that corporation to our community, and the fact that since it was moved there in the late 1980s, early 1990s, it has made increasingly more profit year after year, will you tell me when this decision was made, who made it and why it was made? Don't give me a lecture on how much you've done for Sault Ste Marie, and don't suggest for a second that this could be a self-fulfilling prophecy that I'm putting out here. Just answer very clearly. Who made the decision, when was it made, on what information was it based and what impact studies were done to support this decision?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I can surely understand the member from Sault Ste Marie not wanting me to enlighten the people of Sault Ste Marie of all the good and positive things this government has done for the people of Sault

Ste Marie over the last five years. I can see that wouldn't be in his own self-interest.

I would like to remind the member that if he doesn't want to take my word for it maybe he should read his own local papers: The Sault Star on November 30 said, "OLC Wise to Stay in Sault ... Thank goodness for the Ontario Lottery Corporation's swift and unequivocal response to Sault Ste Marie MPP Tony Martin's concerns about several signs he sees pointing to imminent moving of the headquarters to Toronto."

What has happened here is that we're merging the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp into one gaming corporation so we can save and manage efficiencies. What that means for Sault Ste Marie is that you've had 40 more jobs associated with the racetrack and you've had 357 news jobs with the casino. I don't know how you can turn that into bad news for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Martin: The bad news is that the headquarters is going, and not long after that, we're afraid, everything else will go as well. We're concerned that in fact decisions about gaming in this province are no longer being made by you and the government; they're being made by one person, a Mr Barbaro, who is making frankly very reckless decisions without considering all the factors.

Not only is Sault Ste Marie concerned. I had a meeting with a group called OCAGE in my office about a week ago, and they believe that the province has forgotten its promise to allow local communities like Woodstock, for example, to have a referendum, to have their own say about slots coming to their communities. They say municipalities are being faced with an ultimatum. If slots come in, no matter what the local experience, the communities can't get rid of them.

You've got a man in charge of gaming in this province now who seems to be accountable to nobody. He's the chair, he's the president, he's the CAO, he's Mr Everything. Who is making the decisions about gaming? Why are they being made and on what basis?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I only got part of that question but I think I got enough of it to understand the gist. Despite the member for Sault Ste Marie's negative attitude about the Ontario Lottery Corp and the Ontario Casino Corp becoming one corporation, which has benefited the Sault Ste Marie economy, the Ontario Gaming Corp in the future, as it had in the past, has a board of directors, and under their inspired leadership, despite your protests, will still continue to deliver positive programs and be of benefit to Sault Ste Marie.

1530

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. You're aware that the county of Essex undertook and recently completed a significant restructuring. The number of county municipalities was reduced from 22 to 7 and the number of

county councillors was reduced from 44 to 14. This was done under your restructuring guidelines and approved by the minister of the day, and it was a made-at-home solution by elected representatives.

Now the city of Windsor wants a chunk of the county, and in reply the county has made a substantive offer to the city. The city of Windsor in a recent resolution has defined its concern by calling for improvements to local government in Windsor-Essex similar to the action taken in the regional municipalities of Haldimand-Norfolk, Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Sudbury. The county views this issue as a boundary adjustment and has recently sent you a report to that effect. Minister, my question to you is this: Do you consider it a restructuring issue or a boundary issue?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I consider it an issue for the taxpayers, actually. It's an issue about giving the taxpayers a break, ensuring that we have the efficient delivery of better services for less money, that we have clear accountability and responsibility. Those are the issues that are the issues on this side of the House, to be perfectly frank with you.

I will say to the honourable member that in recent weeks I have had an opportunity to meet with the mayor of Windsor in person to get his perspective on things, but I also, on the same evening, met with the county warden and got his perspective on things. He indicated at that time that I should expect a formal reply to the mayor of Windsor's suggestions in terms of restructuring. I have received that reply, I believe two days ago. The honourable member should know that the reply is quite voluminous. I believe it is in excess of 200 pages, so it'll take us some time to get through it, but we will take it very seriously.

Mr Crozier: In my view it's clearly a boundary issue. Your communications assistant, Karen Vaux, as a matter of fact, and I will quote, said, "It's an annexation or border dispute."

The county warden condemned the city's proposal as economically devastating to the county. The county's offer, as you will recall, is for 2,700 hectares that will allow the city to expand by 60%. This would allow for 48,000 more houses, 120,000 more in population, and it would have additional space for 10 industrial parks. The county is following the process laid out by the ministry. You said you would take action if there was a logjam and it wasn't broken by the end of December. The end of December is close at hand. Will you accept the county's boundary adjustment proposal and advise the city of Windsor that it's a fair proposal and that it should be implemented?

Hon Mr Clement: As I say, the reply from Essex county was quite voluminous, so we will take it under advisement and we will judge it on the basis of what is best for the taxpayers, what is best for accountability, what is best for responsibility, what is best for the provision of services to those hard-working Ontarians in that area.

I'm willing to take the honourable member's suggestions on this issue. I'd certainly like to hear from the member for Windsor-St Clair; I'd certainly love to hear from the member for Windsor West. Perhaps there might be three different opinions, or maybe there will be one opinion. I'd be willing to cast a wager that there might be at least three opinions on this issue. But we would take it under advisement as long as their suggestions help the taxpayer. That is how we run the government, because hard-working Ontarians want us to work on their behalf. Those are the people we respect and are accountable to.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of Labour. Between 1985 and 1995, small businesses in my community and certainly throughout all of Ontario were complaining about excessive taxes—specifically payroll taxes—federally and provincially. One payroll tax they were upset about was WCB premiums.

In 1995, we made a commitment to remove barriers to job creation, investment and economic growth. We pledged to cut workers' compensation premiums by 5%. Since that time, admittedly, many changes have been initiated in workplace health and safety. Members opposite have harped and carped for four years about how our changes would be to the detriment of Ontario workers and how the changes would ignore their safety.

Minister, can you tell us what impact, if any, these changes have had on workplace safety and insurance premiums for businesses in my riding of Kitchener Centre and throughout Ontario?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Thank you very much for the question. The facts are quite clear now: The changes were good. Workplace safety is better than it was when the NDP was in power. As a matter of fact, this year it's gone down for the fourth year in a row. The rate we're charging today is the lowest since 1985. There was a 5.4% decrease from 1999 and a 24% decrease from 1995. Our year 2000 rate is \$2.29 per \$100 of payroll.

It surprises me that anyone would not say that the changes made at the WSIB have had a profoundly positive impact on people who work in Ontario and who do business in Ontario. The fact is, without any doubt, the jury is in: WSIB has done a very good job.

Finally, I've often met with the people who work at the WSIB and who run the WSIB, and I'll tell you that all the news is good. I think we should be very proud of that fact.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Minister. That was certainly a positive response for employers in my riding.

However, I think you'll remember that in 1995, in addition to ever-increasing premium rates, the former WCB had built up a mind-boggling \$11-billion unfunded liability. Some of the premiums that employers are paying are going to pay off that unfunded liability. The Employers' Council of Ontario demanded that we

implement a plan to eliminate the unfunded liability by the year 2014. We gave a commitment to retire that unfunded liability. What progress are we making in terms of the commitment to retire the unfunded liability?

Hon Mr Stockwell: In the warped and distorted world of the NDP, when they were in power, with respect to the WSIB and the unfunded liability—it brings back memories, I say to my friends on this side of the House, when I hear my good friend from Hamilton saying: "Who owed the debt? The employers. We didn't owe anything." That was government under the NDP. Do you know what's really comforting? It's to know some things never change.

The debt was \$11 billion. You were running the WSIB into the ground. It was horrendous, a black hole, the abyss. That's where the money went, and you know it.

The changes that have been brought in not only lowered the rate, and not only are places safer to work in, but we went from an \$11-billion unfunded liability to \$6.6 billion today. We're ahead of schedule.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I say to my barracking NDP friends that rather than barracking you should be thanking us. We turned around the WSIB. Employees are safer today, premiums are lower and it's a better place to do business in—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): A question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I'm hoping you can confirm a few things for me today. In 1997, the province fully funded the cost of shelters for the homeless. Then you started your municipal down-loading exercise and informed municipalities that you would pay only 80% of the cost. Your next move was to cap the funding for this year. In Toronto, that means you are effectively paying 73%. Now I read, in a self-congratulatory press release on November 19, that municipalities can fund preventive programs designed to help people find and keep housing. A good idea, but you are covering up the full story. What you don't highlight in your release is that you're giving no new money to municipalities. What you've told them is that if they want to provide the program, they have to do it out of the declining dollars you give them and the dollars you have capped, all at a time when shelters are full to capacity because of your government's assault on the poor.

Minister, will you confirm today that this announcement means nothing, especially since you're going to be putting no new dollars into the shelter crisis and you're asking cash-strapped municipalities to dig into the funds needed elsewhere to run these programs?

1540

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I certainly share the concerns of the member

opposite with respect to how we can help people who find themselves homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. We provide substantial resources, and the vast majority of what we spend province-wide is spent right here in the city of Toronto, where he is a member. We provide 80% support for the operating costs of shelters.

The member opposite has indicated that we're not providing any new money. We're providing \$100 million in our provincial homelessness strategy, more than \$10 million in the homelessness initiative fund, a large percentage of which has gone to the city of Toronto. We have also tried to seek out more ways that we can help to deal with this challenge. Those include providing the former Princess Margaret Hospital, working with my colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs, to be used to help more homeless people get shelter from the cold.

Mr Caplan: The Minister's answer was interesting. You issue great press releases, and you put out a lot of spin. But when it comes to a real commitment from your government, you don't put your money where your mouth is. You talked about \$100 million, but what you didn't say to this House and to the people of Ontario is that it's mostly recycled federal money, and that's even according to the deal you signed. Your real financial commitments are appalling. Let me review the facts with you.

You used to fund shelters 100%. Now you don't; the funding is now capped. Your share to municipalities was announced at 80%, but you won't give a splashy press release to tell the people in Toronto that it is only 73% and declining. Over two years ago your colleagues in housing slashed funding and caused closure of half of our housing help centres, and announced that the programs you now say are valuable should be funded by municipalities.

Minister, my question for you today is this: Will you confirm today that you have provided no new money into this program? Will you confirm that municipalities are expected to find the cash to make up for the shortage, for what you have cut in these program areas?

Hon Mr Baird: I'll certainly confirm today that this government is providing more support to help the homeless in the city of Toronto than ever before. There is no easy way to eradicate homelessness. There's no single solution to such a complex issue. Our government is committed to working with municipalities, with the volunteer sector and with the private sector.

We're also committed to working with the federal government. We haven't seen any substantial monies coming from the federal government to assist with homelessness. We're putting \$120 million on the table to add to the more than \$2 billion a year we spend through shelter subsidies to help those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. On this issue everyone seems to be on side and wanting to row together except for the federal government. As usual it's letting down the people of Toronto and the people of Ontario. Maybe the member opposite could help us out in that regard and put in a good word for the people of Ontario.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of the Environment.

Recently I had the privilege of flying over the region of Durham with Arnold Kerry, Brenda Metcalf and Don Drake from the region's federation of agriculture. It was really a spectacular and breathtaking scene to fly over the beautiful countryside of Durham and the agricultural area I am so proud to represent. Agricultural concerns are important to me as I am sure they are to you. But at the same time, there is bit of pressure as well in that the local economy needs the infrastructure of the 407. As you would know, the region of Durham is on record as supporting expansion of the 407 into the region of Durham.

Minister, my question is with respect to the expansion of the 407 into eastern Ontario. Can you please assure me and my constituents, and specifically the federation of agriculture people, that there is a proper environmental assessment expansion into the eastern part of Durham region?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Yes, the honourable member is correct. The government of Ontario still has a continuing environmental interest in Highway 407 and the lands underneath the potential extension. There has been a lease of the assets for 99 years. But we still have responsibility, as a government, for the environmental impact of any road extensions for that highway.

If I can give an assurance to the honourable members of this House, we are still in the environmental assessment business. The new owners have to comply with all the environmental safeguards, all the environmental assessment rules that we have in this province. Full consideration will be given on the proposed alignment through the east extensions for sensitive lands within Durham region.

You can tell your constituents they have a government that cares about that, that will ensure the environment is protected and will ensure there's a proper balance between the roadway itself and the lands in question.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time for oral questions is over.

POINTS OF ORDER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before the member rises on a point of order, yesterday I requested that the three government House leaders do their points of order today. There is a circumstance that makes it that one of the members won't be able to attend.

I have listened to the reasoning. I will say, as you know, yesterday we talked about members talking about when members are here and not here. This is one of the reasons we don't do it, because there are some legitimate reasons to be out there.

In light of that, I will entertain the points of order on Monday. There was some confusion on this. I will admit the confusion was my fault. The member did speak to me. Being busy today with the Governor General, I was late in getting back to the member. It was entirely my fault. It was not the member's fault.

In light of that, and in light of the fact that the member affected is the member whose point of order it is, I will be prepared to try and be flexible. In doing so, I will be prepared to hear the points of order on Monday. I thank all the members for their indulgence. I know this is a very important point of order and it will give all the members the opportunity to debate it fully.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Now the member for Kingston and the Islands on a point of order, is it?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): A point of privilege, Speaker. I gave you notice of this earlier and, as a courtesy, I also gave the notice to the Deputy Speaker since it involves him. It relates to matters that happened in the House yesterday afternoon. I'm sure that I and others regard it a privilege to represent people in this House, to be elected by them to be able to speak on their behalf and to vote and debate on matters.

My forefathers, particularly my own parents, fought tyranny for five years during the Second World War so that the democracy that we enjoy in Canada and the western world can be preserved and enhanced. Therefore, I take great exception to what happened here yesterday. Just so there's no misunderstanding, I'm not appealing the ruling that the Deputy Speaker made yesterday, but rather am appealing to you to bring some consistency to the application of the rules here.

What happened here yesterday afternoon is that during the speech of the member from Sault Ste Marie there were a number of interjections. I don't believe there were any more than about 10 or 15 members in the House. Certainly, by the standards I've witnessed here over the last four years, none of these interjections were obnoxious or were irritants or anything like that.

Let me just quote you what happened then. I'll quote what the Deputy Speaker said as well because I want to be perfectly fair about the whole situation. At one point in time, after some interjections, the Deputy Speaker said:

"The Deputy Speaker: Let me be very clear: I'm patient, and yet if I can hear someone except the speaker"—I'm reading from the instant Hansard that came out yesterday; I assume it's the same in Hansard—"then I don't think it's fair. The member for Sault Ste Marie has the floor. Therefore, I'm going to be very fair. The members for Kingston and the Islands and Whitby-Ajax, I'll not warn you again.

"The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie."

The member for Sault Ste Marie then took part in the debate again and he said:

"Thank you very much, Speaker. I really appreciate the fact that you're helping me out here because I've obviously touched a nerve and the folks across the way are getting very anxious about this because they know that I tell the truth here.

"But you put this in the context of an economy—

"Interjection."

"The Deputy Speaker: I'm naming the member, Mr Gerretsen."

1550

What did I say at that point of time? None of the members in my own caucus even heard it. I believe there were two or three members here. I simply asked the Attorney, "Jim, are you the member from Ajax-Whitby?" With the new riding names etc I didn't know which member on the other side at that point in time was being identified by the Speaker. That's all that was said. It was said in a stage whisper. Last night I had the opportunity to speak to members from all sides of the House who were here, and quite frankly, they thought it was overdone by the Speaker at that point in time. But to be instantly named for that and to be ejected from the House—I take that to be a great insult.

The reason I am saying that is that from my reading of Beauchesne and Erskine May it is quite clear that the conduct of the member has to be of gross disorder. I invite you, Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: By what happened here just now, maybe all these members ought to be evicted from this House.

I invite you to review the videotape. I invite you to review the Hansard, and I would ask you to be at least consistent in your rulings. We have a lot of discussion here, a lot of name-calling and a lot of interjections during question period.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: It's going on right now. The kind of behaviour that I was involved in yesterday, Speaker, was nothing like that. It was simply to ask in a stage whisper whether or not the Attorney General's riding was indeed Ajax-Whitby. All I am asking for is some consistency in this matter, Speaker.

I would like you to take that under advisement, and perhaps you could give us your ruling in due course.

The Speaker: I thank the member.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I was in the House at the time the honourable member was ejected. I can tell you that we took great comfort in the fact that finally the Speaker in the chair followed through on the fact that he had warned the member numerous times.

I recall having discussions with you, as well as with the other members who presented themselves as Speaker candidates in this place, and we talked about decorum. One of the questions I'm sure all members in this place were interested in is how in fact the Speaker would conduct the business in this House. You yourself committed to doing what you possibly can do to ensure

that there would be decorum in this place so that questions could be asked uninterrupted and, yes, so that responses could be given uninterrupted.

I, for one, congratulate the Speaker who was in the chair yesterday for naming the member, as he should do, quite frankly, any other member who refuses to allow the business in this House to be conducted with the appropriate decorum.

Mr Gerretsen: Mr Speaker—

The Speaker: On a very brief point of order and we can wrap this up very quickly.

Mr Gerretsen: It's not a point of order; it's a point of privilege that I raise, and my original point was a point of privilege as well, not of order.

I think if the member will check Hansard he will find out that both the member from Ajax-Whitby and I were warned once by the Speaker, not many times, as he just stated.

The Speaker: I thank you very much and I thank the member for giving me notice. It is not a point of privilege.

Just so the rules are clear—one of the things I would say is that disregarding any authority of the Chair is always out of order, and that is up to the Speaker to decide that. I would be happy to meet with the member privately to deal with that.

As you may or may not know, there are some new members, including myself as the new Speaker. We are finding our way. There are days when this House gets heated. We would appreciate all of the co-operation.

What I will try to do and what I undertake to say very clearly to all the members, before I name them I'm going to give them a warning. I've tried to do that. There will be times when I may not do that and that will be my mistake if I do that, but I try to give them at least one warning and I will say, when I have done that on occasion, to three or four members, they have been very good; when they've got the last warning and we've said that's the last warning, they have been very good. So I will try to do that. We don't want to move too quickly in throwing people out of here.

By the same token, I'm sure there have been occasions when I may have been too lenient and there may have been some members that should have been thrown out when I erred the other way. We will attempt to find our way. From my perspective, what I will do is at least warn the member when it is his last warning, and that will give the member the opportunity.

I will say this: Naming a member is a very serious offence. I think most members believe it is. This House works well when there is co-operation, and if there's anything I can do to facilitate that, I will do that.

The thing that I said to all the caucuses was that I would attempt to be consistent; however, having said that, I know there are times when I will not be. The way I believe we can handle it is by co-operation. By working together, we can work to find a level that I think will make all of the people of this province proud of the work we're doing here and, hopefully, that will be helpful.

I say this in all sincerity, because the member is a friend. I will get an opportunity—I'm in the chair most of today, but early next week we can sit down and discuss this.

I do appreciate the member bringing it to my attention and I also thank the chief government whip for his participation as well.

Petitions? The member for Brant.

PETITIONS

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It's Elgin-Middlesex-London, Mr Speaker. It's a hard one. We should go back to the old names. It was a lot easier for everybody in this House.

This is a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"Whereas the price of gasoline has soared over 30% in price in the last six months; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government has done nothing to protect consumers and is afraid to take on the big oil companies; and

"Whereas the wholesale market for gasoline is controlled by an oil oligopoly which controls 85% of the wholesale market; and

"Whereas the big oil companies have used predatory pricing to eliminate small competitors; and

"Whereas, in 1975, former Ontario Premier Bill Davis froze the price of gasoline—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): A point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I first want to ensure that this has been approved by the table and, secondly, I want to put on the record that there is a task force which I co-chair with Joe Tascona that is examining the price of gasoline.

Mr Peters: For the member's information, yes, it is stamped and certified by the table.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario call for a 90-day freeze on the price of gasoline while an inquiry is held into the pricing practices of large oil companies and that the province pass into law the Gas Price Watchdog Act which would protect consumers and independent oil companies from price gouging and predatory pricing."

I happily affix my signature along with many others, including Ann Wales.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Again, it is an honour and privilege to join with 3,000 of my constituents in the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I'm pleased to sign my name to this petition.

1600

MEDICAL LABORATORIES

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has recently imposed a retroactive cap on revenue earned by medical laboratories for services provided under the health insurance plan; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has also required these businesses to refund revenue for services rendered in previous years where the amount of that revenue exceeds the retroactively imposed cap for those years; and

"Whereas this legislation amounts to expropriation of economic rights without adequate compensation or due process of law; and

"Whereas the greatest incentive to the provision of efficient and quality services and products by the private sector is competition and the ability to make a profit; and

"Whereas the removal of these incentives by government negatively affects all of society and particularly patients in need; and

"Whereas this type of legislation also unfairly discriminates against one sector of the society;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That adequate protection of property rights is needed to ensure that government cannot erode the property

rights of certain sectors of society without fair compensation and due process of law."

I have affixed my signature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): It being 4 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 30(b), I must interrupt proceedings and move to orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 7, 1999, on the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / *Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 8, I am now required to put the question. Mr Newman has moved second reading of Bill 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1602 to 1607.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Cameron	Skarica, Toni
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Quellette, Jerry J.	
Hastings, John	Palladini, Al	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Bisson, Gilles
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Christopherson, David
Churley, Marilyn
Colle, Mike
Crozier, Bruce

Di Cocco, Caroline
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Kennedy, Gerard
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc

Marchese, Rosario
Parsons, Ernie
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Pupatello, Sandra
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 21.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I believe that, notwithstanding standing order 51, I have unanimous consent to second and third reading of Bill 26, the Audit Amendment Act.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

AUDIT AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): This is a very brief act—it contains, I believe, two or three clauses—which in effect undoes what we did about a month and a half ago with regard to the auditor. What we have done in this bill is ensure that the auditor is independent in his office by assuring him a pay scale that is tied to a government deputy minister's salary. It also ensures that the auditor's compensation will be reviewed by the Board of Internal Economy on a regular basis.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Hon Mr Sterling: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move third reading of Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Sterling seeks unanimous consent to move to third reading. Agreed? Agreed.

AUDIT AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT

LA LOI SUR LA VÉRIFICATION DES COMPTES PUBLICS

Mr Sterling moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Audit Act / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la vérification des comptes publics.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to just correct the record on some statements that were made in the House this afternoon. In a letter that—

The Acting Speaker: A member can only correct his own record. He cannot correct somebody else's record.

Mr Peters: Speaker, I'd like to correct the record. The references were made that the letter that was written that was attributed to—

The Acting Speaker: Sorry, that's not a point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker, I ask you to consider this: There were material misstatements made with respect to comments that were attributed to my colleague—

The Acting Speaker: That's not a point of order. I already ruled on that point of order. It's not a point of order. We'll move on.

Mr Peters: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I would just like to correct the record this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of privilege. I'm sorry.

Mr Duncan: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I'm referencing standing order 21(c):

"Notice to Speaker

"(c) Any member proposing to raise a point of privilege, other than one arising out of proceedings in the chamber during the course of a sessional day, shall give to the Speaker a written statement of the point...." That's by exception.

It is my view that my colleague's privileges were violated earlier today, in that a letter he is alleged to have signed was misquoted materially. Indeed, statements—

The Acting Speaker: I already ruled that this is not a point of order, nor is it a point of privilege. Orders of the day.

Mr Duncan: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the member for London-Middlesex-Elgin to put his case to set the record straight about a letter of his that was deliberately misquoted by the minister earlier in the session today.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member, I'm not sure of the riding, disparaged this minister with the comment he just made. I would ask him to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: I didn't hear the comment. I will leave it up to the member to determine for himself if he said some disparaging—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Orders of the day.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND LONG-TERM CARE
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999
LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE MINISTÈRE DE LA SANTÉ
ET DES SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mr Newman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend certain statutes administered by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in relation to supporting and managing the health care system / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant certaines lois dont l'application relève du ministère de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée en ce qui concerne le soutien et la gestion du système de soins de santé.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: It's my understanding that according to the standing orders, if the privilege of one member is being breached, then the privileges of all of us are being breached. So I would just like to read into the record the letter he spoke of. I think it speaks not only—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): No, I've already ruled on this matter.

Mr Newman has moved third reading of Bill 23.

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I want to begin by seeking unanimous consent to divide the remaining time among the three parties.

Interjection: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: OK.

Mr Newman: I'm pleased to rise today to speak in support of third reading of Bill 23. I believe that the member for Northumberland spoke quite eloquently on this bill yesterday as he pointed out just how important a proper debate on a bill of this nature is. By rising today to debate Bill 23, we continue the tradition of the Mike Harris government by allowing more time for third reading debate than either the Liberals or the NDP did when they were in government.

I'd also like to thank other members of the House who have spoken in support of this very important bill. Obviously it's not lost on them just how simple yet important this legislation is.

Over the past four years the experts on the Health Services Restructuring Commission have worked with hospitals, district health councils, other health care providers and patients to make recommendations on the tough but necessary decisions needed to improve and sustain our hospital system in the province of Ontario. We are already turning the corner on restructuring, and we're seeing the results of more than \$1 billion invested in more modern, more efficient hospitals throughout our province. We are beginning to see the solutions to problems that other governments had refused to deal with over a 10-year period, and the 10 years I am speaking of are the years from 1985 to 1995, referred to as the lost decade.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission sought the advice of health care experts throughout the province, and the advice they came back with was how to deal with these tough decisions. I'm proud to say that we've made those tough decisions and it's now time to put them behind us and to look forward. The Health Services Restructuring Commission has finished the bulk of its work. Our government's work now is to renew and sustain one of the world's great health care systems by working hand in hand with efficient, up-to-date hospitals ready to tackle the 21st century.

This means giving the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care some added responsibilities. These responsibilities entail the minister extending time lines to assist hospitals to finish restructuring projects such as building new hospitals, opening new hospital wings and cardiac and cancer centres, and delivering improved services to the communities in Ontario. It goes without saying that we remain unshakeable in our continued commitment to the principles of the Canada Health Act, which is based on universal access to a publicly funded health system. This very positive amendment I speak of should be viewed as integral to the focus our government is assuming in our second term in office: The sustaining of the health system with special emphasis on improving the health of Ontarians. The legislation is practical and straightforward. The legislation is clear. It will provide flexibility and support to hospitals as they move forward to better meet the needs of their growing and changing communities.

1620

There's another issue I want to bring up. I'm going to bring it up for the third time, and it's an issue that has yet to be addressed by anyone on the opposite side of the House.

On page 7 of the Liberal policy platform, 20/20 Plan, Dalton McGuinty writes, "We will not be bound by the recommendations of the Health Services Restructuring Commission...." I ask the members of the Liberal Party: Under what legislation would you have done this? They too would have needed legislation exactly like the bill being debated here today if they were truly going to bring that forward and keep their word. Then again I shouldn't be surprised that the opposition members are opposed to this bill. It's yet another example of the Liberal flip-flopping policy on virtually every bill that comes forward.

We all realize that the prerequisite to a strong health system is a strong and growing economy in which jobs are created on a daily basis. So over the past four years we've worked hard to cut taxes, reduce red tape and do what we can to support the private sector in creating new growth and job opportunities throughout the province. It is important to note that since the throne speech of September 1995, over 640,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. In the period from 1990 to 1995, under the NDP government, we saw 32 tax hikes in our province and over 10,000 jobs lost. So we've seen that tax cuts are indeed creating new jobs in our province. It's our government that has had the courage to make a

difference in Ontario. As I mentioned, we had to make some tough but necessary decisions and, as a result, Ontario is now a better place to live, work and raise a family.

I hear the members on the opposite side barking away. What they would have done would have been the easy thing, and that's to do nothing. That would have done nothing for the health care system in Ontario. They simply want to preserve the status quo, and that is not what the taxpayers of Ontario want and not what the patients of Ontario want. The Liberal Party wants to stand still, do nothing and maintain the status quo. That would have been the easy thing to do, but it wouldn't have been the right thing to do. The right thing to do is restructure the health care system in Ontario.

I want to put on record that I have seen first-hand the benefits to Ontario's health system of what the Mike Harris government has done. I have been across Ontario to open many of the new facilities. For example, I had the privilege to speak at the grand opening of the new emergency room at Windsor Regional Hospital. It's an emergency room like many others being opened across our province, which would never have opened while previous governments were in power.

We're not done with projects like the new emergency room in Windsor. During the June provincial election, Premier Harris committed a further increase in health care spending by a guaranteed 20% over the next four years. This will mean almost an extra \$4 billion a year for health care in this province by the year 2003-04.

I want to note again that when we were elected by the people of Ontario, health care spending in our province was at \$17.4 billion. The Liberals on the other side had promised to spend \$17 billion. Each and every year we've been in office since 1995 we've increased the amount of money spent on health care in this province. The only one cutting health care spending in Ontario was Jean Chrétien and the federal Liberals. Each and every year they cut the transfers to Ontario.

We have added more money to the health care system each and every year. Today we are spending \$20.6 billion on health care and, as I mentioned, there will be further increases over the next four years. We were able to make up what the federal government had cut, plus more, because we have a strong and growing economy in Ontario.

The increased dollars are rapidly accelerating the pace of health care and allowing us to proceed with such priorities as hiring more nurses for our hospitals. We have allotted funding of \$480 million to support the increased role of nurses in Ontario, and we're adding some 10,000 nurses to our health care system over the next two years.

Furthermore, the number of day surgeries has increased, new drugs have been developed, new technologies developed, and we're continuing to see the expansion of dialysis units throughout Ontario. There are approximately 25 new communities that now have these vital services available to them, and we presently have 56

new, up-to-date emergency rooms being built or planned, including the one that I previously mentioned at Windsor Regional.

Recently Minister Witmer announced added flexibility for Ontario hospitals as they restructure and build improved health care facilities. This was in direct response to recommendations from the Ontario Hospital Association and its members to help ensure their ability to effectively implement the HSRC directions.

Under the legislation before us today, the minister will maintain responsibility under section 6 of the Public Hospitals Act. Without the proposed change, the minister's responsibility would end on March 1, 2000. Unfortunately, that would be before most hospitals will have completed their restructuring projects.

During second reading, and also during the time allocation motion on this bill, I quoted several chief executive officers from hospitals across Ontario who are in favour of Bill 23. There has also been the CEO of the Ontario Hospital Association who has said that. So I think I've been very clear with those quotes.

So far our government has invested more than \$1.2 billion in hospital restructuring, and most recently the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to providing an additional \$2 billion, for a total investment of over \$3.2 billion. This money will assist hospitals in such restructuring costs as labour adjustment and retraining, capital redevelopment, communications, legal fees, consulting and so on.

In addition, our overall investments and improvements to the health system mean that hospitals will be better able to provide newer equipment for faster diagnoses and better treatments. We're also investing in front-line patient care, from the distribution of physicians throughout the province to the creation of new long-term care facilities.

Each and every dollar saved from health care reform has been reinvested in the priority patient care areas.

Just a quick tour around Ontario confirms that a strong economy means a stronger health care system. Whether it's a new cardiac care centre in Mississauga or Kitchener, or the new cancer centre in Sault Ste Marie, or a dialysis unit at the Scarborough General site of the Scarborough Hospital, or a satellite centre, this government is good for health care.

To date, the level of this reinvestment has topped \$1.5 billion. This includes the 36 MRI machines that will be up and running by the end of the year—up, I want to note, from the 12 when we took office in 1995. Twelve MRIs in Ontario in 1995; 36 MRIs by the end of 1999. That's more than the rest of Canada combined.

We've also seen a 45% increase in cardiac surgeries, and of course the quality of cancer care has increased.

Hospitals, in turn, have asked us to ensure that they have the flexibility to safely and effectively complete their restructuring. The proposed extended timeline leaves that responsibility with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care while allowing hospitals the latitude to complete their restructuring plans.

As well, we have another \$2 billion in capital funding yet to be allocated.

The legislation being debated today, that being Bill 23, is a vital and necessary tool, giving us the ability to effectively distribute this extra money. We have yet to determine where and when the additional funding will best benefit hospitals, medical staff and the population of Ontario. But Ontarians need reassurance that hospitals are able to set reasonable timelines for the start and finish of their restructuring projects. At the same time, we must be sure that our health system, including hospitals, is better able to continue providing the best possible care to patients during restructuring. The proposed change gives us the flexibility to fulfill these necessities.

Our responsibility for restructuring needs extending because of the sheer magnitude and complexity of the task at hand. We're talking about four years of hard thinking and planning by experts spanning the entire breadth and depth of the health system. It's more than 100 hospitals in 22 communities, more than 1,200 separate directions, many of them complex and time consuming, and \$3.2 billion in unprecedented commitment.

1630

It is my hope as I address you on third reading of Bill 23 that we work together towards this vision of health services in Ontario, that together we address the challenges of the 21st century, because Ontario has a growing and aging population with constantly changing needs. That's why the health care system needs to be restructured.

By giving the minister an extension on health care restructuring, we allow the government to effectively meet those needs. Hospitals across Ontario have proven exemplary in assisting with restructuring and helping to modernize the health care system. I want everyone here to know that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and I, as her parliamentary assistant, personally admire and respect the way they've adapted to the dramatic changes of the past decade. They continue to amaze us with the remarkable progress that they've made in both absorbing and leading the changes, changes in medical technology, in clinical services, in treatment.

We've travelled to the communities and we've visited the hospitals. I appreciate the efforts of those who have worked so hard and given so much of themselves during this difficult period of restructuring. We value them and the great distance that they've come.

With this extended timeline under Bill 23, our ministry can continue to work into the early years of the 21st century with hospitals across the province. Most importantly, the extension affords the chance for our government to provide communities across Ontario access to the best and most technologically advanced health care system in the world.

In conclusion, I urge all members to vote in favour of Bill 23, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Gerretsen: I agree with the member on one point. He said that when you've got a growing economy you should have a strong health care system. I totally agree with that. The problem is that the opposite is true. I don't know where this member has been. I'm just reading today's clippings, for example, and you see all the problems with the emergency wards in the city of Toronto.

I read the auditor's report, and one of the most stunning statistics in the Provincial Auditor's report is the fact that only 32% of patients who have been diagnosed with cancer are treated within the four-week period of time that is prescribed by the medical community. That means that 68%, or more than two out of three individuals who have been stricken with cancer do not get the radiation treatment in time.

Just think about the families who are stricken with this on a day-to-day basis, when the man, woman or child finds out that one of their loved ones has been diagnosed with cancer and needs treatment, as if that isn't a dastardly development in itself already, as if that isn't the kind of situation that brings people almost to edge in anxiety and in fear. And here we have a government that apparently thinks it's quite all right that if we could only treat one of those people or start treating one of those people within the four-week guideline, that's good enough.

You may recall that one day the minister said here, as a matter of fact, that things were a lot better, because since the auditor's report it had gone from 32% of the people being treated in time to 35%. Well, I say shame on them. There's no question about it. This is the time. We're living in a booming economy, particularly here in the GTA. It certainly isn't hitting my area of eastern Ontario and it certainly isn't hitting northern Ontario as well. But this is the time we should be preparing our health care system for the future to make sure it's up to date and up to scratch so that when tougher times come, the people will have that social safety net, the health care net to fall back on.

There are many other issues as well that deal with restructuring. One of the two areas that this bill deals with is the ability for the government to sue the tobacco industry, which, by the way, is totally separate and apart from giving the minister more power to deal with the restructuring plans. A good argument can be made that these issues should not have been dealt with in the same bill.

You may recall that the first time this bill was tabled here in the House was on December 3. What is it today? Today it's December 9. The bill was tabled a week ago, and here we are, giving it third reading under a time allocation motion, a bill of tremendous magnitude that affects just about every hospital in this province. It affects our ability to sue the tobacco companies, and I'm totally in favour of that aspect of that. It has to be dealt with in a week, without any kind of public hearing process, or if there was a public hearing process it was so short a period of time here at Queen's Park that it shouldn't even count.

Let's look at the other issue. Let's look at the issue of what the auditor says about what the restructuring is going to cost in Ontario. The health restructuring commission has stated in its report that the total amount of dollars that are required from the provincial purse for restructuring is \$2.1 billion. What does the Provincial Auditor say about that? He's saying it's not going to cost \$2.1 billion but it's going to cost \$3.9 billion minimum. We are \$1.8 billion short.

Where's that money going to come from? We know where 30% of it is going to come from, because the government has already made a decision on that: 30% has to be raised locally in each and every community. In my community of Kingston, in effect, the original estimates word it that \$30 million would have to be raised in our community. The estimates now are, and this is right in line with what the Provincial Auditor is saying the situation is across the province, that they will have to raise probably about \$45 million or \$50 million.

The community simply is not going to be able to do that. As you well know, in many of these fundraising efforts you rely not only on local donations, but you also rely on provincial foundations, national foundations and international foundations to come up with a large chunk of the money.

When just about every community in the province is going to be involved in one of these fundraising efforts, you can be assured that the money from the national foundations just isn't going to be there. So where a lot of this money is going to come from in each and every municipality, including my own—I know; I've been there before in the mid-1980s, when we had a major, very successful fundraising drive for our hospitals—is the local property taxpayer.

Sooner or later these local organizations that are going to have to come up with that 30%, which in our case will probably be about \$45 million, will be going to the local councils and they'll be asking for money, a commitment over let's say the next five, 10, 15 years. The local taxpayers had better be prepared that that's probably going to raise their taxes by \$100, \$200, \$300 per property per year.

The reason I raise this issue, and I've raised it a number of times in my own community because nobody wants to talk about it right now: I think the people should know where this money is expected to come from. So I say, is it proper for the property taxpayer now to be burdened by health care costs as well? It is one of those indirect downloads. We've heard an awful lot about downloading on local municipalities over the last number of years, and we've seen it happen mainly in non-health-related areas. But it has also been in the health-related areas such as, for example, ambulance costs and some of the other quasi-social health care costs. But this is another one. This is going to be how the hospitals, the so-called new facilities in our communities, are going to be directly financed.

What I have been saying is, and I've had a number of discussions about this with Duncan Sinclair, the former

chair of the restructuring commission, why did the government put the cart before the horse? Why didn't they say, when they went through the restructuring process, "Look, let's put the community care facilities and programs out there first so that the people can see what the alternatives are to long hospital stays"?

The problem is, they decided to close the hospitals in many areas around the province first—and I think the count is that up to 40 or 45 hospitals are being closed—and people aren't being reassured that this money that is going to be saved from the closure of these hospitals is in any way, shape or form going to be placed in community care facilities, programs, whether it's home care, nursing care or what have you.

1640

As a matter of fact, last winter in Kingston we had a crisis in the whole home care area when the community care access centre was \$1 million short and individuals were cut off from nursing care and from home care. That left some dreadful situations.

I can remember one day talking to a woman in her mid-70s who was complaining over the fact that her home care and nursing care had been reduced. I thought she was talking about herself until she said, after a while: "Mr Gerretsen, I'm not talking about myself. Come on in. Meet my 99-year-old mother." Here I met an elderly lady lying on her couch in a fetal position, 99 years old, who used to get two to three hours of nursing and home care a day. She had been cut back to two hours a week. These people didn't know what to do.

You and I know what's going to happen in that situation. I haven't checked back with them, I must admit. I tried to get her some extra care and wasn't able to get it. One of two things will happen. Either the elderly individual—we're talking about a 99-year-old woman here—is going to be institutionalized at probably about 10 or 20 times the cost of the home care and nursing care that was being provided at home, or she just isn't going to make it. That is the reality of the situation.

That's where the government made its biggest mistake in the whole area of changing our health care system by, in effect, trying to close hospitals first without making sure that the community care programs and facilities were in place. If there's one issue that should not be a partisan issue, if there's one issue that we all in Ontario should agree upon, it is surely that the health care of our people in Ontario, young or old, rich or poor, ought to be taken care of, that everyone who needs health care should have it available to them. They shouldn't have to wait more than the prescribed time as, for example, cancer patients are doing right now.

When the member states that everything is fine in Ontario, he couldn't be more wrong. This is the one issue, more than any other issue, that the people of Ontario have the greatest concern about with this government and what it's doing to our health care system. I can see down the road a private system being set up along the same lines as our public system. Then it's really going to depend on how much money you've

got in your pocket as to whether or not the care you need at that point in time will be available for you.

I know that people will say, "You're scaremongering; you're doing this, that and the other thing." That is the reality of the situation. I would hope that the debate we had in this country some 34 years ago, whereby we agreed that everyone should be entitled to good health care regardless of how much money they had in their pocket, was a debate that was truly ended and that we all agreed on that. That's how we were different from our American neighbours.

This bill does absolutely nothing to give the people of Ontario any assurances that the public health care system will continue and will be enhanced in the future.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On a point of order?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: If I could request unanimous consent, based on the fact that our next speaker is one of your deputies who just served. He's gone to change. If the Tory wouldn't mind going next and then revert back to us, we'd appreciate it.

The Speaker: Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It's a pleasure, again, to talk about this bill, Bill 23, which gives the government some more time to finish the job that they have started and that they have done so eloquently. Some of the members opposite had some concern that the House didn't come back in time, even though we've explained that this House was being very beautifully refurbished. They've done a great job. I think we should all be proud of it. All Ontarians should be proud of it.

At the same time, we as a government were consulting with the people of Ontario, consulting with the hospitals and consulting with the administrators. They told us that even though the restructuring was perceived as a mammoth and very difficult task when it was started—if I can name a few names, Dr Dixon from Peel Health Centre, which is now called Sir William Osler Health Corp, agreed that it would be most difficult to go back and that no government should undo the progress this government has the guts to implement.

As my good friend the member from Northumberland said the other day, other governments closed 10,000 beds, the equivalent of 35 medium-sized community hospitals, but they were afraid to actually close any hospitals because this would create havoc. Like the member from Northumberland said, they were gutless and did not have, to use his words, "the intestinal fortitude." It does take a lot of guts to make difficult and tough decisions.

I'm very close to this industry. I come from a pharmaceutical background. I've spent many years manufacturing drugs, pharmaceuticals that actually reduce the number of days one stays in the hospital. If you look at the total health care pie, new pharmaceuticals reduce the number of days one stays in the hospital.

Our government has taken a great step by restructuring. I'm going to quote more stakeholders who have

told us that we are on the right track. This is by Ron Bodrug, president and CEO of Scarborough Hospital: "I'm requesting that the Ministry of Health take the necessary steps to ensure the appropriate study, monitoring, review and necessary changes to the commission's directives and recommendations." Tony Dagnone, president and CEO of London Health Sciences Centre: "We believe that as the Minister of Health you must have the authority to shape and transform health care in the face of the future needs of Ontario citizens." These are some of the quotes that are coming from administrators.

In Mississauga, as in many communities, there are many wonderful hospitals and wonderful health care workers. What we as a government are trying to do in our restructuring proposal is reduce the size of administration while at the same time increasing front-line health care services. We have had discussions with the OMA and with the doctors, and they all seem to saying that even though much work has to be done, we are on the right track.

We believe that a government's job is pretty simple: to do the things that only government can do or should do, and to do them very well. That list of essential priority services includes providing dependable health care and quality education, keeping our communities safe and preserving our province's natural heritage. By doing our job well in these areas, we make Ontario a better place to live for you and your family, for all of us.

Making sure every person in Ontario has access to top-quality health care is a most urgent concern. Our health care system distinguishes us as Canadians, and we are proud of it. Our government is fully committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act, including universal access to the publicly funded health care system. All of us and our families need to know that medical care will be available when and where we need it. That's why we made the tough decisions needed to modernize our health care system. The changes we made weren't easy. But as experts in the system told us, they were long overdue.

1650

When we took office, the health care system had been under incredible strain for many years. With Ontario mired in a deep recession, pressure on the system continued to rise. Only because of our economic turnaround have we been able to start giving health care the resources it needs.

Back in 1995, the federal government had just begun cutting the money it transfers to Ontario for health care. Although hard-working Ontarians paid for Ottawa's support with their tax dollars, the federal government cut \$2.8 billion from our health care funding. In spite of these cuts, we succeeded in increasing Ontario's health care funding to \$18.9 billion, by far the highest in our provincial history: \$1.2 billion more for long-term care, resulting in 35% more beds and expanded community-based services. We increased the number of women protected by breast cancer screening to 325,000, which is up from 65,000 in 1995. We provided a pneumonia vaccine for the elderly and very ill. We first created and

then doubled funding for the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program to screen all newborns and identify children at risk. We also invested \$225 million over two years as part of our plan to reduce emergency room waits; an extra \$67 million in funding for hospitals in high-growth areas; established a university program and more jobs for nurses.

Previous provincial governments avoided tough decisions. They closed thousands of hospital beds, like I said, and allowed money to be wasted maintaining underused buildings instead of spending on front-line patient care. Past governments—the Liberals and NDP are both culprits—have also known for years that more money was needed to be directed into community-based programs and care, but no one would make the tough decisions to change the way money was being spent.

Doing the right thing isn't always easy or politically popular in the short term, but with strong leadership and expert advice it can be done. The result will be a better health care system for our families.

The job of creating a modern health care system isn't finished. We will increase funding by another 20% over the next five years to meet future needs and guarantee our access to the health care services we all need and deserve. Above all, we need to maintain a strong and growing economy to provide the resources to meet tomorrow's needs. That's what our plan is all about.

In the past four years we've had to replace every one of the 2.8 billion dollars that Ottawa has cut from Ontario's transfer payments just to keep our health care funding stable. On top of that, we've added \$1.5 billion in new funding to expand and improve health care services. However, our population is aging and the cost of medical treatment is growing. Demand for health care services will continue to rise. The health care system will need even more money in the future. In order to meet future health care needs, we will increase funding for health care a guaranteed 20% in the next term. Based on the latest 1998-99 figures, this will mean nearly \$4 billion a year more for our health care by the year 2003-04.

Our Premier, Mike Harris, fought hard to get the federal government to restore the money they cut from our health care system. Just recently he convinced them to give some of that \$2.8 billion back to our province.

We are putting every penny of the \$900 million we recovered from Ottawa straight into the direct line health care services. It's a start, but Ottawa should be doing much more. Our plan contributes more new Ontario funding towards health care than the federal government is putting back in. Mike Harris and our government will continue to fight for our health care dollars and, if we recover more of our federal funding, it will always go directly, straight into health care. But we've learned not to count on Ottawa. Our plan guarantees a 20% health care funding increase even without more federal help.

We've also agreed to emergency room assessments within 15 minutes of a patient's arrival. Members opposite, please note. It goes back to the credibility.

Interjections.

Mr Gill: Members don't seem to believe that. Let me assure you. Ask the public.

We went back to the public six months ago. They decided that we are on the right track. We all went with our own programs, as I said yesterday. We went with our Blueprint, you had your 20/20, you had some other plan—beautiful plans, but whom did they believe in? People of Ontario can't be fooled. They know what's good for them.

A minimum 60-hour hospital stay; the Liberals are proposing 48 hours. We went beyond that. A minimum 60-hour hospital stay after birth offered to every new mother in Ontario, at least one follow-up phone call and the offer of a home visit.

There are many programs that we've implemented. Much more restructuring still has to be done.

Many communities have said: "We want you to continue. Please don't give up halfway. We want you to continue with the mandate you've been given." We will listen to them. We will agree with them and, therefore, I'm requesting of everybody in the House a speedy passing of this bill so that we can continue with the good work we have started.

The Speaker: As per the unanimous agreement, we'll now revert to the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton West for being so kind as to jump into the lurch when I was literally in between suits in this House.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You look better in black.

Mr Martin: I look better in black? OK.

I want to thank the members of the House for their unanimous consent that I would get my time when I did come to speak on this very important bill.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): It was our unanimous consent too, Tony.

Mr Martin: Yes, I said, "the members of the House." Thank you. Thanks to Margaret Marland, specifically, from Mississauga, whose brother used to live in Sault Ste Marie and we now miss him. He was—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Keep it up? OK.

Hon Mrs Marland: Was he a good Conservative?

Mr Martin: He was a good Conservative and an old-time Conservative, I must say.

Mr Christopherson: The kind with a heart.

Mr Martin: With a heart and a conscience and a moral ethic about him. A man who understood community.

Hon Mrs Marland: Don King.

Mr Martin: Don King. If we had more people like Don King in the province, doing the kinds of things that he did in the community of Sault Ste Marie on behalf of people, we'd all of us be better off.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): He spent all of his life in court.

Mr Martin: Well, he may have. Was he a lawyer? The member for Etobicoke Centre says he spent most of his life in court. I don't understand that.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Oh, Don King. Not the promoter of boxing.

I wanted to put some thoughts on the record here this afternoon and I have to, in advance, apologize to the member from Etobicoke North because I may get ever so slightly negative and critical by the time I'm finished. That will be a surprise, I'm sure, to many of the folks across the way.

Health restructuring is what we're talking about here. Who doesn't know about health restructuring across this province? Who hasn't heard of the efforts of this government to restructure the health care system? It was a program that was put in place like a freight train coming down the track, hitting every community.

Interjection.

1700

Mr Martin: No, I said that I might get a little negative, just a little critical. But I really am going to try to temper the tone tonight because we're close to Christmas and all that kind of thing.

It was like a freight train coming down, hitting every community; the safety barriers were down, they went flying. Plans were developed, people were consulted and put in place. Everybody thought that right after the train was going to come the money and we were going to be able to get on with the restructuring that was laid out in the plans that we all looked at; some we didn't agree with because we thought there should be more money as we looked at some of the thoughts that were put on paper. As the auditor's report of a couple of weeks ago pointed out, we weren't far wrong in our anxiety and our worry. In fact, at the end of the day he suggests that the restructuring commission was off by some billions of dollars in its projections as to how much the capital costs would be to do the restructuring that it laid out.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): What's a few billion among friends?

Mr Martin: Yes, what's a few billion among friends?

Everybody across Ontario thought, even though they may have been critical and were working very hard to challenge the powers that be of the day—the boards of directors of the hospitals worked, sometimes behind closed doors, with the restructuring commission to put in place plans that weren't necessarily going to respond to what they saw as the real needs of the community. As you know, health care has been in some degree of flux for some long time now.

I agree with the government when they say this is not a problem that has just shown up overnight. It has been around for quite some time. Mr Newman, I think, painted that picture very clearly and very correctly here on a number of occasions in this place, that in fact health care needed some significant and serious restructuring.

As a matter of fact, when we were government from 1990-95, we spent a lot of time, I have to tell you, and energy, effort and money to try to come to terms with—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: This was after Mrs Caplan.

We spent a lot of time trying to deal with a system of health care delivery in this province that had grown to be quite sophisticated and complicated, because it's not an easy thing to deliver health care, no matter where you are. It's difficult, particularly if you're trying to make sure that the quality of health care and access to health care is the same across the province, whether you're in Toronto or Moosonee, whether you're in Rainy River or Wawa, that you have access to a quality of health care that speaks to getting well in a timely fashion, being able to get in and get done what you need to get done, having a doctor you could call your family doctor, who you can confer with from time to time as to your own health and perhaps the health of your children and your family. We all worked very hard at trying to come to grips with the escalating cost involved in that exercise as well.

You'll remember that when we took power, Mr Speaker, because you were here, that the cost of delivering health care in the province was escalating at a rate of an average of a 12% increase a year all the way through the 1980s. When we got to be government, at a very difficult time in the fiscal and economic history of this province, we found ourselves, alas, in the midst of a recession equal, some say, to the Great Depression in terms of the impact. For the first time in the history of the province, actually, revenues went down, revenues for government declined, not that we had cut taxes. I dare say that there wouldn't be too many in here who would suggest or expect that we would do that, because we believe that we need taxes to pay for these services, and these services, if they're going to be of a quality nature and accessible to everybody, have to be funded properly and appropriately. The way that we care for each other in a democracy, in a civilized society, is to pool our resources. We call it taxes. We do that through taxation so that we can afford to have things like health care, education, social services and other government-delivered programs available to us.

We're talking about health care here and the fact that we struggled very hard from 1990 to 1995 to come to terms with this. We were moving in a direction that we thought was positive and constructive. We were struggling with issues that still confront us today, being successful to some degree, and not finding answers in some other areas.

The Health Services Restructuring Commission was supposed to answer all these problems. They were supposed to come and talk with us, sit down and come up with plans which were going to resolve a whole lot of these issues. Alas, it seems to me, my perspective on it is that for the most part it was very much a political exercise, an exercise in public relations. Putting a commission out there that literally cost millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, going around the province, meeting

with people, putting together a plan—as a matter of fact, let me share with you what happened in my own community.

They ran out of time. They wanted to call the election, but they needed the restructuring commission to be finished so they could deliver the package, so they could put the wrapping and the bow on it and deliver it as a promise in their blue book and talk to the people of Ontario about all the good things that they've done and are going to do in health care. They literally came into my community, did a quick-and-dirty review and listened to a few of us.

The health care coalition and I forced a public forum at city hall at that time—and we filled the place—so that people in the community might have a say, as our hospitals come more and more together under one structure and governance, about what we needed to have as a community to respond to the health care needs and what would take us into the next century. Alas, we found out by way of an article in the newspaper that the health restructuring was going to be wrapping up and they had a week to report back. We sent in our stuff. I know a whole pile of other people in Sault Ste Marie sent in responses and certainly the hospital worked very hard at putting together their plans, and actually came to the public forum that we had, sat with us, listened. We felt that in some very significant ways, their final report to the ministry reflected some of what they heard.

The restructuring commission had about a week to deal with all that information—that's all—and in a week, magically came back and said, "OK, here's the plan." The problem here is, even though all that work was done and we did put in place a plan, and the restructuring commission came back with what they deemed to be what we needed—it included some very exciting and interesting possibilities; for example, the possibility of a cancer bunker in Sault Ste Marie—since then, we've heard nothing.

There may be some work going on behind the scenes that I've not heard of. The Ministry of Health may be in consultation with the hospital board in our community about where we're going and what will happen. But we who worked so hard to have our voice heard, to very constructively and positively put on the table what we thought would be a good plan for Sault Ste Marie for now and for the next 40 or 50 years, have heard nothing as to where those plans went. They seemed to have gone into a big black hole someplace, until this legislation came forward.

That may be good news in some ways. I don't want to be negative and critical here tonight, because I promised the member for Etobicoke North that I wouldn't be. This may in fact be good news, because the plan that was sent forward and approved by the restructuring commission and some of the comments that we made weren't quite in sync. We thought that was it, that was our last kick at the cat, that there would be no more opportunity for us to have any real dialogue and chance to have our thoughts heard and perhaps included in some of the new plans. But

now we're told that after all that work that was done by the restructuring commission, after all the money that was spent and the plans were put together, now the minister is going to take over and she's going to decide what's going to happen next and whether in fact those plans were the right plans and how they're going to deal with the \$2-billion shortfall and whatever else that needs to be done, given some of the difficulties and problems and challenges that have arisen since the restructuring commission shut down and since the election and up until this moment.

1710

It's actually with that in mind, with the fact in mind that the minister is now going to take some personal responsibility for making sure that these restructuring plans actually happen and that the timelines required are realistic and that there is actually an integrated plan coming forward for the whole province, that maybe we do have a chance to get her ear and to speak to her and have her understand some of the problems we're experiencing.

As a matter of fact, I phoned the minister's office not long after I got elected and I asked to have a meeting with her.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Who?

Mr Martin: Elizabeth Witmer, your minister. You should meet her sometime. She's a great lady. She sits right in front of you.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know her.

Mr Martin: Do you? Good. OK. Anyway, I phoned her office and I said, "We need a meeting because we have some real big problems up here." We have a lot of people travelling for some reason or other to other parts of the province for health care and they're finding it very difficult in many real ways—the cost, the inconvenience—just a million and one different challenges that you folks in the south might not know a whole lot about because if you can't get into a facility next door, you just jump on a bus or take a taxi or the subway and go down the road to the next facility. In Sault Ste Marie, if you can't get the service that you need at the local hospital, you've got to go 180 miles down the road—that's almost a day's drive—to go to Sudbury. Or if you can't get health care in Sudbury, you may have to go to Thunder Bay. Do you know how far Thunder Bay is from the Soo? Does anybody over there know how far Thunder Bay is from the Soo? How far is it?

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Six hours, maybe six and a half.

Mr Martin: No, it's eight hours. It's as far to Thunder Bay—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): If you're flying by Polar Bear Express.

Mr Martin: No, it's Bearskin Air.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: No, Wawa is 140 miles. Thunder Bay is as far from Sault Ste Marie as Toronto is. So to suggest for a second that things are the same in the north as they

are down here, and if you just close things and rationalize things—

Ms Mushinski: Why would you go to Thunder Bay when you can go to Sudbury?

Mr Martin: It is. Yes, I said that. Sudbury is 180 miles. Thunder Bay is as far from Sault Ste Marie as Toronto is. I'm trying to say that the distances are quite significant.

We have to travel because there's a plan beginning to evolve in northern Ontario that is regionalizing health care services. So if you can't get health service in Sault Ste Marie or Wawa or Chapleau or North Bay or Timmins or Gogama or Foley or any of those communities in—

Mr Hastings: Geraldton?

Mr Martin: No, Geraldton's in northwestern Ontario. But Geraldton too, yes. If we can't get health care in a timely fashion in those communities, because more and more we're having further difficulty getting specialists to come to any of those communities, and even to get family doctors in there, we have to go someplace else. You know where we have to go? We have to go to either Sudbury or Thunder Bay, and I'm telling you how far those places are.

If you get somebody who's got cancer or who has had a heart attack or whose child has fallen down and broken their leg, and they have to travel to these places, you can only imagine the cost in actual dollars and cents if it's airfare. I don't know how many of you have flown from the Soo to Toronto or Toronto to the Soo lately, but I'll tell you, the airfares are quite stunning. You could fly to Europe cheaper these days than to Sault Ste Marie or Thunder Bay or Sudbury or Timmins and back. Very expensive. As a matter of fact, in more and more instances, as we have to travel for more and more of the health services that we used to have in our community, it's becoming very expensive. There are lots of things that happen to people of a health care nature that you could not possibly decide to take a car to the facility you need because it's just too far, the complication is too much and it's hard to do.

We have a particular problem in the north in that we're not able to get the specialists we need into all the places we need them. As a matter of fact, we are now discovering that we're having a hard time even getting family doctors to come to many of our communities. It used to be that in the north we had a special problem, but because of the cutbacks in the dollars that are flowing to education, rural Ontario and many of the areas in Ontario that are a distance from Toronto are experiencing the same thing. Where the north used to be the only area that really had a serious and significant doctor shortage problem, we're now finding that's happening all over the place. The focus is no longer so much on the north where that problem is concerned. So we're losing out again.

What I'm doing here tonight is trying, through this place and this House and perhaps some of the government members who speak to the minister on a regular basis, to send a message. I called her, and she agreed to

meet with me on this issue. So I came down to Toronto with a woman from Toronto who speaks on behalf of Easter Seals, and I'll speak about that in a couple of minutes here because they have a particular issue with the northern health travel grant.

We went to see the minister's staff. We had a meeting with the minister's staff because the minister got called away at the last minute to go to a funeral, and we laid on the table with that gentleman, Tariq Asmi, all of our concerns, all of the issues around travel and health care in northern Ontario. We explained to him the distances and the different challenges, the different roadblocks we face in trying to get our health care.

But most particularly, in the context of travel and health care and trying to get to some of the facilities we need to get to, is the northern health travel grant. The northern health travel grant, you may remember, was a program introduced to this place and to the province back when the Liberals and New Democrats formed an accord government.

Mr Smitherman: Those were the good old days.

Mr Martin: Those were the good old days. That was when we could go to the Liberals, who were the government of the day, and say, "Either you do this or we pull the plug." Because there were a whole lot of us from the north in the NDP caucus at that time, we said, "We want a travel grant for health care." Even back then the regionalization of health care was beginning to happen, and because of the lack of specialists and physicians, we needed to travel then. It's becoming more so now and more complicated now, but back then we had that problem.

That program was put in place. Mind you, it was never meant to cover all the costs of travel for northern residents, although I don't understand that. We're making the point here today that this government has to look at the possibility of providing for all the costs of northerners who have to travel for health care outside of their community, because it's becoming more and more expensive and more and more people are not being able to afford it. In fact, some of them are even making decisions not to get the health care they need, because they can't afford it.

We're asking the government. There are resolutions that have been circulating across northern Ontario, some of them circulated by my colleagues from Thunder Bay-Superior North and Thunder Bay-Atikokan, Mr Gravelle and Mrs McLeod. They've been up in northwestern Ontario for quite some time now getting resolutions passed by municipalities, circulating and getting petitions and bringing them before the House here. I have a resolution going before my own municipal council this coming Monday night asking this government, in light of some of the challenges we're facing, for some assistance.

Here is how the resolution goes:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment

outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be the full responsibility of those residents and therefore financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

1720

"Whereas travel costs, in particular airfares, accommodation and other related costs, have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds to southern Ontario patients needing care"—listen to this now; this is really interesting—"at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre to have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north, which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their diagnosis or geographic locations;

"Now therefore be it resolved that the city council of Sault Ste Marie hereby petitions the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to review the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing specialist health services outside of their communities, until such time as the care is available in our communities."

In my view, that simply is a stop-gap measure. If we're going to be moving to regionalizing health care, which it seems we are as we look at the plans that are coming down the road, I hope the minister will take the time to go up to northern Ontario and speak to some of the people involved in health care, not just the boards of directors of hospitals, but some of the folks who actually deliver the care: the nurses' associations; the doctors' associations; some of the folks who provide the maintenance and backup work for the nurses and the doctors in the very important work that they do; the SEIU, Service Employees International Union, which represents a whole host of very important health care workers in the system.

Speak to those people. Speak to the members of the community, our constituents, the citizens of the communities up there, and find out from them what they think they need, what they would like this government to spend their tax money on re the provision of health care for them in their communities. You'll find that most of them will be very realistic and honest with the minister and they will tell her exactly what it is they think they need.

We know an awful lot about our health care. We know what we confront every day. We know what happens when we bring a child into emergency and what happens following that. For example, there was a young boy this summer who broke a bone, a badly broken wrist, and would require surgery to fix it—that was the doctor's

analysis in Sault Ste Marie. He was told there was a problem, however, because we had no orthopaedic surgeon in Sault Ste Marie. They had either retired or left. We were without an orthopaedic surgeon, if you can imagine, in a place like Sault Ste Marie. So plans had to be made to fly this young man to Timmins. He was told to fast overnight. His mother, though, asked the question: "If we fly to Timmins, are we guaranteed that he will get back, and who makes those plans? Can I go with him, and if I go with him, will I get back with him?"

I think they were pretty honest and serious and important questions to ask. She got a call the next morning. They flew him and her to Timmins. He met with a doctor, not the specialist, who suggested, after looking at the X-rays, that actually he didn't need surgery. There was another procedure they could do that would fix the wrist for him that meant he didn't need to be admitted to the hospital and he didn't need to have surgery. That may seem like no big deal to members across—

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, it's a big deal. We know it.

Mr Martin: Yes, right, it is a big deal, because it wasn't long after the discovery that he didn't need surgery that the specialist said to the little boy and his mother that they were on the hook to get themselves home. Here they had been flown to Timmins on the expectation that he would have surgery, because that's what the doctor said in Sault Ste Marie. They got to Timmins and a new procedure was prescribed, and because of that now they were on their own as to how they would get home. These are the kinds of things that we run into. This mother looked around and said, "How do I get out of here?" She went to the bus station because that was probably the cheapest way. There was no direct flight to Sault Ste Marie from Timmins, so you can imagine the cost to have to have flown from Timmins to Toronto to Sault Ste Marie. It costs us over \$800 just to fly back and forth from Sault Ste Marie to Toronto, so you can imagine the cost they would have incurred there. But the bus trip from Timmins to Sault Ste Marie would literally have taken 16 hours—16 hours to get home, at her cost.

To make a long story short, she phoned her husband, who had to take a day off work and pack up the rest of the family, drive all the way to Timmins, pick up his wife and son and drive home. That's what we have to do in northern Ontario right now to get the health care that we need for our families and for our children. How would you like to have to deal with that on a fairly regular basis, Mr Speaker, if that was the reality for you? That's the reality we face up in northern Ontario. So we have a problem. We have a problem with travel and we're suggesting that this ministry needs to look at this question and do something about it.

Let me give you another small example here. Easter Seals in Sault Ste Marie does some excellent work. It's just an excellent organization. It has some really good people involved who work with it, people like Heather Breckenridge here in Toronto, people like Jennifer MacDonald in the office in Sault Ste Marie, who really

work hard on making sure children who aren't well get the services they need wherever it's required.

They had a special deal for quite some time with one of the local airlines such that the amount of money at the end of the day that would be left over to be paid by the parent of a child and an attendant to get to Toronto or Sudbury or wherever they needed to go was enough such that they had an arrangement made with the Rotary Club—another excellent organization in our community—that they would cover the difference. They would get money from the northern health travel grant to cover the cost of the patient travel and the attendant and what was left over the Rotary Club would cover.

Alas, though, there's been a bit of a change in that this air company, who, God bless them, did some really good community work by offering these special rates to the Easter Seals and some other organizations in the community, found that they had to put in place a program that was equally accessible to everybody in northern Ontario that required health travel. So they increased the fare for the folks serviced by Easter Seals—mind you, at the same time reduced the cost of travel for health reasons to everybody else. But by virtue of increasing the cost to Easter Seals and, subsequent to that, the cost to the Rotary Club, we now have a program that's in tremendous difficulty, because the Rotary Club is saying that if they have to come up with the increased cost, which has risen substantially from that time, they will not have any money left after a month or two of the beginning of the year. So we have some problems.

To give you a little background that was put together by Heather Breckenridge of the Easter Seals, I'll read this into the record as quickly as I can:

"The northern health travel grant provides \$210 for an individual to travel. Children and adults who require an attendant to travel with them, and based on a physician's approval, are eligible for an additional \$210.

"This rate is based on a one-way car trip to Toronto. It was established in 1994 and the program has had no increase since. Other costs like meals or accommodations are not covered.

"Flights from Sault Ste Marie range from \$261 for a seat sale to \$890 regular fare. The medical fare rate offered by Air Ontario presently is \$325 but is scheduled to increase to \$445 January 1st."

This is where the problem begins to arise:

"Sault Ste Marie is worse off than other northern communities because of the distance to travel to Toronto or London, the fact that most must travel by plane rather than car due to their condition, and the fact that trips often require additional costs for taxis, meals, and accommodation.

"Due to the financial hardship many residents are experiencing charitable organizations, service clubs, and church groups are being asked to use their limited financial resources to help residents requiring travel for health reasons.

"Many residents assume health travel out of Sault Ste Marie is funded fully by the government but it's not."

We're making the case that if this is the road we're going down, if we're going to continue to regionalize, if something isn't done to improve our chances of getting more specialists in and more doctors in, we will be travelling more. So this government has to look at the cost of travel and the northern health travel grant.

1730

I'm asking the minister if she's serious about taking hold of this restructuring program now and if she wants to do something significant for the north besides trying to get more specialists up, besides trying to get more family doctors to come up to Sault Ste Marie—and we have lots of advice on that for her if she will come and talk to us—she needs to look most immediately at the cost of travel and she needs to review the northern health travel grant so that more money is put into it so that the residents of northern Ontario are not overly burdened simply to get the health care that they need.

Mr Smitherman: It's an honour for me to have a chance to follow the member from Sault Ste Marie in this important debate. It was interesting, as someone who represents a densely populated urban riding in the centre of our province's capital, Toronto, to hear a little bit about Sault Ste Marie and to be reminded of the challenges that face health care around this province.

I have a fond association with Sault Ste Marie, having lived there for one winter. My father owned a company that was the house carrier for Algoma Steel, and Sault Ste Marie is a place that I remember fondly, so it was interesting and an honour to follow the member from Sault Ste Marie.

I would, in this debate on Bill 23, like to take some time to tell the story of health care in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Despite some of the stories about growth that's going on in the GTA which seem to focus on growth taking place in places like York, Durham, Halton and Peel regions, where it is of course very, very strong, there is a story as well in downtown Toronto of very strong population growth.

In fact, there is a building boom in residential development in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale and in ridings like Trinity-Spadina, right next door. In my riding alone, the King-Parliament neighbourhood is seeing much new residential construction. As a result of initiatives taken by then mayor Barbara Hall on the Kings project, King-Parliament is seeing much new development.

Yorkville alone, a neighbourhood very near to here, has 11 new condominium development proposals before the city of Toronto for consideration.

The railway lands just to the west of the SkyDome will be home in a short time to 5,000 new units of housing, probably with something like 15,000 new individuals.

In my riding, the Gooderham & Worts site, where once fine products were created, will now be home to many thousands of new people. Of course, the prospect of new housing related to an Olympics bid speaks as well

to residential growth in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

We experience as well in downtown Toronto very significant population swells by day when hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people from all parts of the greater Toronto area come to work in downtown Toronto. On evenings and weekends, entertainment uses swell the population as well. People do not only require assistance from hospitals and from our health care system when they are at home but also when they are at work.

We also have a very significant linkage with University Avenue hospitals and with the University of Toronto, their teaching hospitals. What is learned there and the critical mass that is created by these institutions being able to work together and to work with the University of Toronto is very, very significant.

In downtown Toronto, as well, we have a very diverse population. I think everybody knows that. My riding may be home to more homeless people than any other riding in Ontario, with significant populations of people suffering from issues related to mental health and to addictions.

We have serious challenges related to the delivery of health care to very diverse ethnocultural communities, to many, many people suffering from HIV and AIDS, to people who work in the sex trade and who are IV drug users and who suffer from other addictions.

As well, we have an abundance—too many people, I would say—who are poor. As a result of that, there is a very strong link obviously between poverty and health, and we have many, many people who require health services that have historically been provided and that as a result of the actions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission are put at risk.

Only yesterday I took a break from question period and went on behalf of Central Neighbourhood House to work with their home support network to deliver Christmas gift baskets. I met with several people: a gentleman suffering from severe arthritis that keeps him house-bound; a gentleman who is blind and who, although quite mobile, does suffer from limitations; and a woman who is suffering with the challenges associated with sickle-cell anemia.

In my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, which has the highest proportion of tenants in the province, the highest number of public housing units in the province, the highest number of social housing units in the province, we have many people who are very dependent upon an efficient health system. As I said, this is put at risk by much of the activity of the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

When I moved downtown from Etobicoke Centre in 1986, some hospitals did not necessarily have a particularly sterling reputation as places where you ought to go for service. I'd like to point out the evolution that occurred at the Wellesley Central Hospital. When I came downtown it was a place that was viewed as one that you should only go to as a last resort. The emergency ward there had a very poor reputation. Under the effective leadership of Scott Rowan, who now serves in Hamilton,

I believe, meaningful community-based reforms took place and that hospital transformed itself into one of the finest institutions you could imagine.

Then the government of Ontario appointed the Health Services Restructuring Commission, and what they have left in their wake is nothing short of a tragedy: emergency wards on redirect, ambulances bounced from place to place with sick people in them.

We have in Toronto Centre-Rosedale a lot of fingerprints of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. The Salvation Army Grace Hospital—closed. The Orthopaedic and Arthritic Hospital—closed. Women's College Hospital—stripped of its autonomy, a world-renowned institution for women's health, not just health services delivered to women but health services delivered by women, with senior management positions held by women. The government, in its move at restructuring, has reduced the autonomy of this very fine institution.

Wellesley Central Hospital, as I mentioned earlier, is one that I have a very strong relationship with, having worked on the Staying Alive campaign, which came about as a result of the actions of the Health Services Restructuring Commission. This hospital received special treatment from the Health Services Restructuring Commission—a forced merger. No consensual-style amalgamation, no opportunity to negotiate the terms under which it would merge with St Mike's, but rather a forced merger that did nothing to protect much of the community concern that was out there.

I am so proud of the communities that stood and fought against that forced merger because these are communities that I am proud to represent. They are communities that are poor and they are often disenfranchised, but they got together and coalesced around this issue and said, "No, we'll not stand by readily as you take from us what we need and what we have committed to working with and what we have worked to build." I'm proud that they found their voice.

I must say I am less proud of the role that the Health Services Restructuring Commission played because they ignored many other options. With respect to Wellesley and Women's College, those two fine institutions which had many things in common came together and developed their own merger proposal which they presented to the Health Services Restructuring Commission, a merger proposal which had associated with it significant savings and the protection of those historic service delivery models that the communities they served so depended on. The Health Services Restructuring Commission set up by this government didn't even bother to consider their proposals.

Many on the government side will say, "We took tough action. We needed to do it because this wasn't going to happen anyway," but that is untrue. In Toronto Centre-Rosedale the Wellesley Hospital and the Central Hospital merged, a voluntary merger long before the Health Services Restructuring Commission had been created. These two hospitals came together, they closed a site. There is ample evidence that these people, working

together, could find savings, could find efficiencies, but could continue to deliver service in a way that suited the needs of those communities. The decision to close Wellesley Central Hospital deliberately understated the physical capacity of St Mike's hospital to bring those programs in-house.

1740

If we fast forward to today, it's a very tragic situation developing in the neighbourhoods that surround this Legislative Building. St Mike's has a \$22-million operating budget deficit forecast. Their capital redevelopments are incomplete, but rumours are out there that the pressure to close early is intensifying. I ask the question to the members of the government, who will dutifully vote in favour of this bill that places so much power in the hands of the minister: Who will protect the people who are currently in those beds, who are ill, where there is no physical capacity yet created at St Mike's to take them on? Where will the people who currently are in the psychiatric ward at Wellesley Hospital go when this hospital is closed and the capital investments have not been made at St Mike's? Where will the people who use the emergency ward, a very, very busy emergency ward, at Wellesley Hospital go?

Already in downtown Toronto our hospitals are suffering from the highest level of redirect ever. Sick people are being shuttled from hospital to hospital in an attempt to find a place where they can get the care they require, and this government stands idly by as one more emergency ward, a very busy emergency ward, is set to close, further intensifying the problem. I would like to see a commitment from the government to keep that open.

What price will we pay? More than half a billion dollars in capital investments will be spent at just two of the hospitals that are in Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and within sight, within short walking distance—probably as far as some members opposite could drive a golf ball—facilities will close, only to have new ones built. Tell me that that's efficient, and demonstrate that the savings are there.

What other price have we paid? We've paid in extraordinary loss of connection to communities. Where once we had communities coming together and working with hospitals like the Wellesley Central Hospital to deliver programs in a way that worked, we now have larger organizations, less able to deal with those communities.

In closing, I make a plea to the minister as she assumes these powers: Ensure that the emergency ward and the psychiatric beds at the Wellesley will not close until capacity is replaced, as planned but not yet delivered at St Mike's; and ensure that women's health services, like reproductive health services, are provided for, that the needs of the community are met.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to join in the debate on Bill 23. Let me just start with a couple of quotes of some prominent hospital CEOs in the province.

The first one: "The legislation extends the minister's authority to amend the Health Services Restructuring Commission's directives to fine-tune the restructuring that's being implemented according to local needs. We support that." That's Manu Malkani, president and CEO of Sault Area Hospitals.

The second one is Tony Dagnone of London Health Sciences Centre, which I'm proud to say is in my riding, who supports the legislation. He's quoted as saying, "We believe that as Minister of Health you must have the authority to shape and transform health care in the face of future needs of Ontario citizens."

That's what this is all about. It's about restructuring hospitals so that we can have a vision for our health care and we can actually put patients first. It's about re-investing and restructuring that will create modern hospitals with new technologies that deliver more services to more people.

I'm proud in London-Fanshawe because at the London Health Sciences Centre in October the Premier was down and he toured the facility, which had a first non-invasive heart surgery. This was done by a computerized robot called Zeus. What that does for a community or a patient when you can perform a surgery that's non-invasive: Speaking for Tony Dagnone, he says that the expense involved in performing that type of surgery, and taking that to the next level where you can continually do that, will mean that they will be able to perform more surgeries on more people with less hospital stay.

Essentially, you can serve more people by cutting down the amount of time in the hospital. Wouldn't that be great for Ontario? Wouldn't it be great if the opposition would put people first and support those types of initiatives? But we got here after 10 years of Liberal and NDP mismanagement. They ignored the realities of modern health care, as I've just described. To renew that hospital system, we had to restructure it.

Let me give you a few examples of some of the new technologies and new centres that came out of restructuring: creating regional dialysis centres with machines out in local hospitals such as Woodstock and Stratford, close to London, two small communities with services they didn't have before; creating two new cardiac care centres; opening five new cancer care centres in Mississauga, Oshawa, Kitchener, St Catharines and Sault Ste Marie—it's all about local needs; that's what this is all about—56 new up-to-date emergency rooms; tripling the number of MRIs in the province.

These are all supported by the Ontario Hospital Association. They asked for this legislation. To give you the example of the Health Services Restructuring Commission, 22 communities will be affected by this legislation: Brant county, Essex county, Hamilton-Wentworth, Kent county, Lambton county, Niagara, Waterloo, Toronto, the greater Toronto area, Haliburton, Ottawa-Carleton, Pembroke, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Leeds-Grenville, Kingston, Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, Prince Edward-Hastings, Cornwall, Nipis-

sing, Sault Ste Marie, West Parry Sound and then, of course, London Health Sciences Centre in my riding.

In order to prioritize these needs, you need financial resources. What we've had to do in the last five years is make those financial resources a reality. We had to cut taxes to do that. The province was bankrupt. As well intentioned as anybody is, you cannot help our health care system and our education system if there's no money. We cut taxes, created an economy with almost 600,000 net new jobs and more people paying taxes. It gave us the ability to invest in health care.

Back to priorities: Back when the Canada Health Act was negotiated, the province of Ontario and the federal government split that commitment on a 50-50 basis. That's a true partnership. In most relationships we believe in the concept of 50-50. That's the type of arrangement that was negotiated. Today the federal Liberal government pays 11% of spending in Ontario for health care; 11 cents on every dollar. For anyone to say that health care is a priority and only fund it with 11 cents on every dollar is not fooling anyone. I know the people in my riding are disgusted at the federal Liberals' lack of priority for health care.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to continue the debate on this bill dealing with health care. I think there continue to be significant problems in the health care system and all of us should acknowledge that. Hopefully they're going to get better. Time will tell. My own view is that until we begin to look at health care differently than we have, I don't think we'll ever really solve the issue.

1750

I always ask people, "How much do we spend on health in the province of Ontario?" The answer I normally get back, particularly around here, is that it's about \$20 billion. Of course, that's not the answer. The answer is, we spend in the province of Ontario probably about \$30 billion to \$32 billion on health care. It happens that we fund about \$20 billion with a lot of provincial revenues and the other \$10 billion to \$12 billion is funded out of other sources; drug plans and supplementary health plans and all those sorts of things. I assume it's about \$32 billion. There's a rule of thumb that says it's about 10% of the gross domestic product. If that were the case, it would be about \$37 billion, but I assume it's around \$32 billion. In my opinion, until we begin to say: "That's how much money is spent on health care in the province of Ontario. Is it well managed?" I don't think we'll really get some long-term solutions.

Also, and I've felt this way for a long time, I think there's a conflict of interest in the Ministry of Health because it has two responsibilities. We rely on it to develop our health policy for us but it is also the largest health insurance company. It funds \$20 billion of our health costs. In my opinion, they are often in a conflict of interest: What may be in the best interests of health may not be in the best interests of that insurance company, namely, the Ontario government. My own view is that we have to look at that because the insurance side of the

Ministry of Health may say, "Listen, if we approve that drug, even though it may be beneficial, it's going to add substantial costs to our drug plan." I've had this view for a long while.

I once asked the NDP Minister of Finance, Mr Laughren, "How much money do we spend on health care in the province of Ontario?" He said, "I'm going to wait for the supplementary because obviously this is a trick question." What I was trying to get at was, don't look at how much the province funds of health care; look at the total spending. As I say, until we begin to appreciate that, I think we'll perpetuate, to use the jargon in the health area, the silo mentality, where there's a hospital silo and there's the drug plan silo and there's the OHIP silo and there's the long-term-care silo.

It's very difficult for any government, I might add, to move funds among those things. It's relative to this bill because the bill gives the Minister of Health the authority to continue to assert the recommendations of the hospital restructuring commission. In my view we are tinkering at the edges until we lay out for ourselves how much money we spend on health in Ontario, how it is paid for and whether that is the most efficient mix of spending. It's important for economic reasons, by the way.

I actually read material that the government sends. Minister Palladini sent all of us, a week ago, a pamphlet on site location, it was called. It was a magazine produced by, I gather, an independent organization that analyzes site locations in North America. It was extolling the virtues of Ontario. It said there are two key reasons why plants might want to locate in Ontario, and several other reasons but two key ones. One, they said, was our skilled labour force. The second was the way we manage our health care and that it is heavily publicly funded. Clearly, as we all know, the auto sector looked at this very carefully. One of the key reasons why they located in Ontario was that their health costs per employees are, I think, about one third in Ontario what they would be in Michigan.

I raise these issues as we debate this bill because I'm convinced that we're going to continue to face problems in health care. The debate around here often is, "It was just as bad when you Liberals were in, so what are you talking about?" But the public is going to want solutions. I worry that there is some evidence that it's not getting better. I hope I'm wrong. Until we see the evidence that it is getting better, I think we have to say to ourselves that maybe we don't have the right long-term solutions.

I go back again to where I began my comments, and that is, in my opinion, until we say, "How much money are we spending on health care in Ontario? How is it being funded? Is it being spent in the right areas or not?" and—again, I have my view—until the policy area of health is separated from the insurance side of health, I think there will be a continual conflict of interest within the Ministry of Health.

All of us have had issues of health in our own constituencies. The members will be familiar with the reason I'm so concerned about what appears to be a

continuing problem in the emergency wards. Two years ago, my local hospital asked me to come in and meet with a family that had just lost a young woman in their family, a pregnant lady who suffered a brain haemorrhage. There were about 20 calls made to try to find a hospital here in Toronto that could handle her brain haemorrhage; they couldn't. She went to Hamilton and tragically passed away.

I never made that issue public. I sent the minister a letter saying, "Can you explain this?" Really, it stayed hidden for six months and no answer. Finally, in my opinion because I pushed heavily on it, there was an inquest held. I went to hear the inquest. They reported June 29, 1999, on the reasons why that person lost her life. The recommendations from the jury called for solutions to our emergency room situation. I was assured at the time, on June 29, the government was going to move forward to solve them. I say again, based on what we're seeing today, I don't think that issue has been resolved.

Where does that leave all of us? If we don't find real, long-term solutions and we put band-aids on these things, we'll be faced with similar headlines next year and the year after. I believe the solution rests with looking at the

total health needs, not just how much the province funds, and separating the Ministry of Health's responsibilities. Have the insurance side of it, but have the health policy without conflict.

The Speaker: Mr Newman has moved third reading of Bill 23. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): It carried.

The Speaker: I heard a no. It didn't carry.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

"Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I would like to request that the vote on Bill 26 be deferred until Monday, December 13."

Therefore the vote will be deferred.

The House now stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1759.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre de l'Environnement, ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Com- mercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Dan (PC)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thunder Bay- Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing- Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Skarica, Toni (PC)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

THIRD READINGS

Audit Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 26,
Mr Sterling
Mr Sterling.....1295
Agreed to1295

**Ministry of Health and Long-Term
Care Statute Law Amendment
Act, 1999, Bill 23, Mrs Witmer**
Mr Newman1296
Mr Gerretsen1298
Mr Gill1300
Mr Martin.....1301
Mr Smitherman1306
Mr Mazzilli1308
Mr Phillips1309
Vote deferred1310

OTHER BUSINESS

Food drive
Mr Hampton.....1277
The Speaker1278

**Universal Declaration of Human
Rights**
Mrs Johns.....1278
Mr Curling1278
Mr Kormos.....1279

Points of order
The Speaker1291

Speaker's ruling
Mr Gerretsen1292
Mr Klees1293
The Speaker1293

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999

AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC
ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS

**Loi de 1999 concernant la vérité
sur Ipperwash, projet de loi 3,**
M. Phillips
Rejetée.....1271

**Loi de 1999 sur la responsabilité
des banques d'alimentation,**
projet de loi 20, M. Spina
Rejetée.....1272

DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mémento du millénaire
M^{me} Boyer1273

PREMIÈRE LECTURE

**Loi Christopher de 1999 sur
le registre des délinquants sexuels,**
projet de loi 31, M. Tsubouchi
Adoptée1275

**Loi de 1999 modifiant le Code de la
route (protection de la jeunesse),**
projet de loi 32, M. Bartolucci
Adoptée1275

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne le ministère
de la Santé et des Soins de
longue durée, projet de loi 23,**
M^{me} Witmer
Adoptée1295

**Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi
sur la vérification des comptes
publics, projet de loi 26,**
M. Sterling
Adoptée1295

TROISIÈME LECTURE

**Loi de 1999 modifiant la Loi
sur la vérification des comptes
publics, projet de loi 26,**
M. Sterling
Adoptée1295

**Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois
en ce qui concerne le ministère
de la Santé et des Soins de
longue durée, projet de loi 23,**
M^{me} Witmer
Vote différé1310

CONTENTS

Thursday 9 December 1999

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Truth About Ipperwash Act, 1999,	
Bill 3, <i>Mr Phillips</i>	
Mr Phillips	1257, 1262
Mr Kormos	1258
Mr Smitherman	1259
Mr Bisson	1259
Ms Di Cocco	1260
Mr Hampton	1260
Mr Parsons	1261
Mr McGuinty	1261
Mr Kennedy	1262
Mr Klees	1262
Negated	1271
Food Bank Accountability Act, 1999,	
Bill 20, <i>Mr Spina</i>	
Mr Spina	1263, 1270
Mr Kennedy	1264
Mr Kormos	1265
Mr Tascona	1265
Mr Agostino	1266
Ms Churley	1267
Mr Stewart	1268
Mr Bartolucci	1269
Mr Martin	1269
Mr O'Toole	1270
Mr Christopherson	1270
Negated	1272

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Municipal restructuring	
Mr Bartolucci	1272
Izetta Hobbs	
Mr Martin	1272
Hanukkah	
Mr Young	1272
Hospital funding	
Mr Agostino	1273
QuitCare program	
Mrs Elliott	1273
Millennium Memento	
Mr Boyer	1273
Mr Stewart	1273
Rural Ontario	
Mr Peters	1274
Fiscal responsibility	
Mr Newman	1274

FIRST READINGS

Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry), 1999, Bill 31,	
<i>Mr Tsubouchi</i>	
Agreed to	1275
Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Youth Protection), 1999,	
Bill 32, <i>Mr Bartolucci</i>	
Agreed to	1275
Mr Bartolucci	1275

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Children with special needs	
Mrs Marland	1275
Mr Kennedy	1276
Ms Churley	1277
Sex offender registry	
Mr Tsubouchi	1275
Mr Levac	1276
Mr Kormos	1277

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ipperwash Provincial Park	
Mr Phillips	1281
Mr Flaherty	1281
The Speaker	1282
Government consultants	
Mrs Papatello	1283
Mr Baird	1283, 1284
Mr Hampton	1284
Ms Martel	1284
Mr Kormos	1285
Emergency services	
Mr Hampton	1285
Mr Hodgson	1285
Highway 407	
Mr Gravelle	1286
Mr Turnbull	1286
Mr O'Toole	1291
Mr Clement	1291
Children with special needs	
Mr Coburn	1286
Mrs Marland	1286
Millennium Memento	
Mr Kennedy	1287
Mrs Johns	1287

Correctional facilities

Mr Dunlop	1288
Mr Sampson	1288
Ontario Lottery Corp.	
Mr Martin	1288
Mr Hodgson	1288
Municipal restructuring	
Mr Crozier	1289
Mr Clement	1289
Workplace Safety and Insurance Board	
Mr Wettlaufer	1290
Mr Stockwell	1290
Homelessness	
Mr Caplan	1290
Mr Baird	1290

PETITIONS

Gasoline prices	
Mr Peters	1293
Karla Homolka	
Ms Mushinski	1293
Medical laboratories	
Mr Kwinter	1294

SECOND READINGS

Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 23, Mrs Witmer	
Agreed to	1295
Audit Amendment Act, 1999, Bill 26, Mr Sterling	
Mr Sterling	1295
Agreed to	1295

continued overleaf



Document
No. 26B

No. 26B

N° 26B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 9 December 1999

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999



Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 9 December 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PENSION BENEFITS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT DES LOIS CONCERNANT LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE

Mr Skarica moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act and the MPPs Pension Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 27, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite et la Loi de 1996 sur le régime de retraite des députés.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth-Burlington): I would like to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for Simcoe North and the member for Durham.

It gives me great honour to speak on second reading of Bill 27, the Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999. These are changes that have been asked for and have been desired by a large segment of our community for some time. As a result of that demand, our government made a commitment to pension reform in the 1997 and 1998 Ontario budgets. We promised to consult with the pension community about access to locked-in accounts. Consultations were held on the Pension Benefits Act in both 1998 and 1999. These consultations were held by parliamentary assistants to the Ministry of Finance Terence Young and Bill Grimmett, both gone but not forgotten. We promised to design a system which would allow individuals more flexible access to their own funds when they know they need them.

Now we are delivering on our commitment to pension reform in Ontario. These reforms are consistent with the recommendations of the pension community during these consultations. Through Bill 27 and its regulations, we are responding to concerns of Ontarians who wanted early access to their locked-in retirement funds when they have the greatest need. By "greatest need," we mean those facing serious financial hardship or considerably shortened life expectancy due to critical illness, but we intend to define "need" in the broadest term rather than the specific, to enable the most flexibility and fairness to those who need access to their monies in desperate times.

With respect to financial hardship, during the consultations which were held, as I've indicated, by my good friends Bill Grimmett and Terence Young, individuals came forward who were in dire straits financially and who needed access to their locked-in money sooner rather than later. Every MPP in the House has had letters and requests from individuals in dire need of those monies.

For those facing clear financial hardship, the withdrawal of the money today is important to protecting their own or their family's quality of life and best interests. To gain financial hardship access, individuals would have to apply to the superintendent of financial services of Ontario. Specific criteria for eligibility under financial hardship will be announced in the new year and contained in regulations to this bill. What I can tell you at this point is that access under financial hardship would not be restricted to any minimum age and, depending on circumstances, individuals will be allowed to withdraw all or a portion of the funds in their locked-in retirement accounts.

With reference to shortened life expectancy, this bill would entitle individuals faced with that type of unfortunate tragedy, a shortened life expectancy due to critical illness or disability, to withdraw all monies from their locked-in accounts. These locked-in accounts include LIRAs, locked-in retirement accounts, formerly known as a locked-in RRSP, or LIFs, life income funds, and LRIFs, a new locked-in retirement income fund which we are introducing to permit retirees to base withdrawals on their actual investment returns.

I'd like to deal with LRIFs. During consultations, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP, asked us to change the paternalistic rules governing access to life income funds, LIFs. I myself met with the president, Lillian Morgenthau, a couple of years ago. They indicated to me, as they did to the parliamentary assistants at that time, that there was a substantial need to change the rules that existed at that time. CARP said that pensioners should no longer be forced to convert their retirement funds to life annuities at age 80. There was overwhelming support shown through the consultations for another option which would eliminate the annuity purchase requirement.

That is why we created the LRIF, the locked-in retirement income fund. The LRIF would eliminate the requirement for pensioners to purchase a life annuity at age 80. Pensioners then would be free to transfer their retirement monies among locked-in retirement accounts; that is, LIRAs, LIFs or LRIFs. These rules exist in some

western provinces; Alberta comes to mind. They have worked well there and have given pensioners flexibility and a greater range of choices in how they wish to invest their pension monies. If a pensioner chooses not to withdraw the maximum amount in any given tax year, the LRIF would also provide the option to carry forward unused withdrawal room from current to future years.

I'd like to talk briefly about locked-in accounts with small balances. We believe that with locked-in accounts with small balances the transaction costs are too high. The regulations should be changed to allow individuals over age 55 who have less than \$15,000 in their locked-in accounts to access these funds.

Bill 27 would also help us to streamline and harmonize a number of rules. It is intended that this bill would streamline and simplify pension administration in Ontario and provide for harmonization of our pension rules with those in other Canadian jurisdictions. We received numerous submissions from numerous financial institutions requesting these types of changes, and this will be an extremely good-news item for those types of investors and for those institutions.

In conclusion, we promised to help Ontarians with access to locked-in retirement accounts. We promised to help Ontarians faced with financial hardship or shortened life expectancy. We are doing everything we can to ensure that these people in dire hardship can have access to the monies that they need and which will help them out. We have delivered. The Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act would help those in need access these funds.

I'd like to briefly refer to the MPP pension plan amendments as well, perhaps to clarify some misconceptions. There is no more money going into the plan. MPPs will not receive any additional funds as a result of this change. No additional taxpayers' dollars will be spent on this initiative.

By eliminating the previous gold-plated pension plan, we saved taxpayers \$5.5 million annually. Those savings remain protected. The new MPP program gives MPPs the same access to their retirement savings as every other Ontarian saving for retirement through RRSPs. It completes the transition to an RRSP-type plan for these members, as we committed to in 1996 when we reduced the value of their pensions.

The MPPs who opt to access funds before retirement will be required to pay the appropriate taxes as would any other Ontarian who is withdrawing money from an RRSP. This change will provide MPPs, who took a considerable risk by leaving the job market, some flexibility in planning for their families' futures. This is not double-dipping. Members will not be allowed to collect a pension and a paycheque at the same time. Members who opt to access these funds must be both retired and over age 55.

In conclusion, it is my honour to move second reading of this bill. We did extensive consultations throughout Ontario. There was a consistent and clear demand for changes in the area where people are in hardship. Plus, a

number of financial institutions indicated to us that they needed to have a more streamlined administration and they needed to have greater simplicity and consistency with laws throughout the country. We have delivered on that. That should save substantial monies in administering these plans and that, of course, will make those plans more profitable and give greater access to funds for the investing public.

I have mentioned this twice and I would like to mention it again. My two predecessors, Terence Young and Bill Grimmett, both of whom did not run for election this time, did extensive consultations. I heard from the investing public they did an excellent job, and the people who did give submissions were most grateful for their input and for the opportunity they gave in listening to the various people who gave submissions. Again, I think a lot of credit must be given to Terence Young and Bill Grimmett for the very excellent job they did in helping the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, and the government of Ontario prepare for this bill. I would like to congratulate them and make sure they get the credit they deserve.

1900

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise here this evening to take part in second reading debate on Bill 27, the Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999. I was so pleased on Tuesday when our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, introduced this legislation. Once again, we demonstrated the leadership that this government has provided to the citizens of Ontario.

Our government promised to design a system which would allow individuals more flexibility in accessing their own funds, their own money, if and when they knew when they actually needed those funds. For example, people of our province who are faced with severe financial hardships or even a life expectancy shortened by injury or health would have easier access to locked-in retirement accounts.

The finance minister stated on Tuesday of this week, "As we committed in the 1998 budget, this government is taking steps to ensure Ontarians faced with difficult circumstances are permitted to access locked-in retirement funds." As he said in 1998, it is another promise made and it's another promise kept by this government. This government is about keeping promises it has made to the citizens of Ontario.

I can think of families in my riding who have been locked into plans and would like an escape clause to allow access to additional funds. I can think of a resident who held a mortgage on his son's farm and became incapable of working himself. Basically what happened was, when the economy was strong, the son invested in the farm and the father held a mortgage with capital he had, and his own pension plan was locked in. This happened when the economy was strong. When the economy weakened and the price of commodities went down, the young farmer found himself in the difficult position of not being able to pay his own father for his

mortgage. This is an example where if the father had the funds—in this case the father didn't foreclose on his own son, but it was interesting to think that he was almost in the position of having to sell that farm back, a farm that had been in the family for a couple hundred years.

I can think of another resident who needed his funds to help his daughter. His daughter had contracted MS. It was very unfortunate. The son-in-law left; he decided to split. He left a couple of little children. The father had an awful time trying to come up with the funds, which he had locked into an account, to help his daughter who was actually in a desperate position. In the end, he in fact did help his daughter get out of that predicament.

These are examples of places where people really do need their own funds, and it was so unexpected at the time.

If passed by the Legislature, this bill and accompanying regulations would permit persons facing considerably shortened life expectancy due to critical illness to withdraw all monies from their pensions or locked-in accounts. Those in financial hardship would apply to withdraw all monies from their pensions or locked-in accounts. Those in financial hardship would apply to the superintendent of financial services of Ontario to determine whether they meet the necessary criteria to access some or all of their locked-in funds.

During recent consultations on the revisions to Ontario's retirement fund legislation, requests to provide flexibility were made by a number of organizations, including the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, CARP. Lillian Morgenthau, the president of CARP, said recently:

"CARP congratulates the Ontario government for adopting our recommendations to do away with paternalistic policies on locked-in funds. CARP has been working to persuade provincial governments to change the regulations on LIFs since 1997.

"We are very pleased that the proposed legislative changes will provide Ontarians with LIFs with an alternative, so that they will no longer be forced to convert to life annuities and will have more flexible access to withdraw money from them. We trust other provinces and territories which have not yet changed their regulations on LIFs will follow Ontario's lead in this matter."

Again, our government has shown the leadership that Ontarians deserve and have come to expect. Perhaps other provinces will follow our lead in our Ontario leadership in cutting taxes as well.

This act has been designed to provide Ontarians with appropriate access to locked-in retirement accounts in cases of hardship. Individuals would be provided with more flexibility in determining their annual withdrawals from locked-in retirement savings. A new locked-in retirement income fund, an LRIF, would permit retirees to base their withdrawals on their actual investment returns.

Unlike life income funds, an LRIF would not require individuals to purchase a life annuity. Retirement monies

are freely transferable among locked-in retirement accounts, locked-in funds and locked-in retirement funds.

For those who do not withdraw the maximum permitted, the LRIF would also provide the owner with the option to carry forward unused withdrawal room from current to future years. The package streamlines pension administration, provides for the harmonization of pension rules with other Canadian jurisdictions and completes the transition to an RRSP-type system for members of Parliament.

Before I comment further on the MPPs' pensions, I'd like to give other examples. Up in my area in Simcoe North, where I'm from, and southern Muskoka, where a lot of people move to in their retirement age, an awful lot of people build retirement homes or purchase campsites or RVs in campgrounds. Quite often it's their second home; it's their retirement area. These people are working towards retirement.

The odd time, something will happen. I'm not saying this is with every couple, but as they approach their retiring years, and these people are often on pensions, something may happen to one member of the couple, perhaps a stroke, a heart attack or something like that, where they're just completely unable to work. Suddenly their investment becomes a liability and they have a problem maintaining their cottage or their second home, their campsite or even their home in the major city or area where they've come from. This would also allow them to take advantage of access to those funds. I compliment the minister for bringing this forward at this time of the year especially, when there are a lot of people who are looking at the Christmas season and seeing the need for additional funds not only at Christmastime but in requests they may have for access to the funds for needs for their family.

A lot of people in our province do not have large sums of money for retirement. They count on their pension investment, because in most cases they have spent their lives educating their children, paying off mortgages, perhaps buying a small cottage or campsite. I'm really encouraged by the fact that pensioners can now have the flexibility this act provides.

Let us dwell for a moment on the MPP pension plan amendments. I do not want to have anyone think for even one moment that the government is about to return to the days of gold-plated pensions. There are a few key messages that should be provided to everyone. There is no more money going into the plan. MPPs will not receive any additional funds as a result of this change. No additional taxpayers' dollars will be spent on this initiative.

By eliminating the previous gold-plated pension plan, we save—this is our government, the Common Sense Revolution government—the taxpayers of Ontario \$5.5 million annually. Those savings remain protected.

The new MPP program gives MPPs the same access to their retirement savings as every other Ontarian saving for retirement through RRSPs. It completes the transition to an RRSP-type plan for these members, as we com-

mitted to in 1996 when we reduced the value of their pensions. It's interesting that even though we did reduce those pensions to people, most of the people in the province, I think, still believe that we have a gold-plated pension plan here and that it's a cash cow for people who retire. Nothing could be further from the truth. I think we did set a strong example for the people when we introduced that legislation back in 1996.

MPPs who opt to access funds before retirement will be required to pay the appropriate taxes, as any other Ontarian would.

This change would permit MPPs, who took considerable risk by leaving the job market, flexibility in planning for their families' futures. This is not double-dipping. Members will not be allowed to collect a pension and a paycheque at the same time. Members who opt to access their funds must be both retired and over the age of 55.

1910

As a government, we obviously take criticism from the members opposite. It's only common sense. I've heard that over the years. As I grew up and watched the parliamentary channels and came here at different times as a high school student, I was always amazed at the criticism the government showed against the opposition, or vice versa. But as we quickly approach the Christmas holiday season—it's a time of the year when people get together a lot more than normal—I find, as a new member, that we have brought forward legislation that I believe is important to the people of our great province. Not only does our legislation promote public safety and a strong economy, but I believe it does so in a very passionate manner in many ways.

Bill 27, that I speak on this evening, allows flexibility to those who need access to funds. I hope it's a great Christmas present to people who require that accessibility later on in the year.

I want to talk for a moment about Bill 22, the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act, another piece of legislation we brought forward. This is an act that not only honours a Canadian hero, an Ontario hero, but it follows on a commitment for improved public safety of our citizens and our police officers by enforcing more discipline and heavier fines. This follows in conjunction with our commitment to honour our fallen officers with a memorial here at Queen's Park. Again, I'm sure there are some families of our officers who are happy at this time of year that the province of Ontario has honoured their lives. I think both of the opposition parties agreed to most of this legislation as well.

Today was an interesting day to be here, to watch David Tsubouchi, the Solicitor General, introduce Bill 31, Christopher's law. As a member who has a family—my family is on our Christmas card this year. My wife was actually here at the same time, sitting beside the family when it was introduced. I thought it was a fantastic thing for this assembly to do today, when this law was introduced. It has been a long time coming. I was pleased to see it here as well, particularly at this time of the year.

I have no other comments at this time, but I'm pleased to be able to speak on the second reading here tonight. I now see Mr O'Toole here.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure to follow the member and to address this bill. I always like to examine the bill from the perspective of my constituents from the riding of Durham. I think it's important to phrase the comments I may make in the next 34.5 minutes—that's the time I've been allocated—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, exactly; it's more like 34.8, which is a long time.

Respectfully, my riding of Durham is one of the fastest-growing areas of the province. Yet, according to demographers, it also has a disproportionately high number of people who are of retirement age. If you look back at the history of not just Bowmanville or Port Perry or Blackstock—which, by the way, are three very important little communities in my riding—it was an agricultural community that has grown, so there's a very large proportion of people who live with a very high quality of life, and people live a long life.

This particular bill will affect those people in a very positive way. I think that's primarily the motive for the bill. As I've said before, I've always tried to look at why legislation comes forward. I believe that would be defined as the motive. The motive is that there are a lot of people living longer. Through the improved health care system and drugs and other kinds of therapies and quality-of-life issues, people's needs and support systems are absolutely critical. I want to assure people that if you look back at the commitments made by the Premier and our Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, in the 1998 budget, this particular issue was brought forward as a promise. It has always been my experience, as a member of this caucus, that a promise made is a promise kept. That's the balanced equation of accountable government. I'm proud to be a member of that team. I could reflect on that for some time, because it's the reason I ran again.

Bill 27, the Pension Benefits Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999, is something that benefits the people I've just addressed in my riding. Providing more coverage for this particular piece of legislation at this particular time in this particular year—Mr Speaker, you would know full well, if you weren't snoozing, that 1999 is the International Year of Older Persons.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): We're attentive.

Mr O'Toole: I know, and paying diligent attention to the reflections I'm placing before the House on this particular bill.

The year 1999 is the International Year of Older Persons, so in a general sense it's a compliment to that generation and a compliment of our cabinet and our ministers for bringing this sort of complimentary legislation forward. There probably will be those this evening and during the course of this legislative process in second and third reading who will try to reflect some disparaging

comments. I would say to you with all respect, it's their duty as members of the opposition to oppose. Their elected duty as opposition members is to oppose.

I've made two important points, but I want to make this one, one more time; I want to drive it completely home to my riding: We talked about the motive, populations living longer, and we talked about my riding of Durham and the importance of addressing the escalating aging and people wanting to live in some sort of dignity in the last decade of their lives. I have in my riding another community which I haven't had the occasion to address very often. It's Wilmot Creek, which is a residential retirement centre, a very nice area adjacent to Lake Ontario. It's run by the Rice family, and they are moving towards independent lifestyles with a community of interests of people of retirement age. I can tell you it's a very active community. What I've found by representing those people, meeting with them and listening to their issues and concerns—very important to me—is that on occasion one partner, the spouse, may pass away or fall ill, which brings us to the very substance of this legislation.

I want to commit to the record—this is the legislation, by the way; it's not particularly elaborate or cumbersome. It has a few definitions, which I will in due course cover. However, the Ontario Pension Benefits Act is being updated. That's first, and I believe the prior speaker addressed that. The member for Simcoe North is new to the House, but he's not new to caring about people. That's why most people get elected. He has made some of these particular points in his comments. So at the risk of repeating some of that, I want to put on the record again that senior citizens will no longer have to return their LIFs—life income funds—to annuities at the age of 80, so at the age of 55 they make decisions based on some other kinds of regulations. They now have an alternative with locked-in retirement income funds, RIFs, as they're referred to by the financial planning community, which by the way is a growing community, and hopefully at a future date we'll look at that as well. This means that money originally placed in vested pension plans would not have to be transferred to annuities at a certain point in time. This gives the individual a lot more discretion and control over certain circumstances of their lives. We've all seen the Freedom 55 television commercials, and then certain things happen to one of the spouses or individuals and the plans they set up—the annuities, the RIFs, the registered income funds—don't work; they don't apply.

1920

This is a tragic story, and I think it's appropriate to put it on the record at this time. In all cases that you can make the legislative process more human, so that people can actually visualize what we're trying to do to help people—and I think the motive of members of all sides is ultimately to help people here. I think there are sometimes differences in what you might do to address that. This is a case I'm somewhat familiar with, and I will read it. It does take some time, but it's a story that needs to be

told, with your permission, Mr Speaker, because this bill addresses the need.

"In December 1996 my husband suffered a debilitating stroke." This could be the story of my own family, as I think and reflect, so if I get a little melancholy here, I want you to forgive me. I remember my father, quite early, at 62, and my mother, and how our life as a family changed. I don't want to move it down to a personal level, but this is a story that needs to be told, and you can make this legislative connection of a government that cares about people. The motive of compassion is clear in the response.

"After several months of rehabilitation, it became apparent that he would never be able to return to work." That's a sad point we all face at some point. I'm perhaps in that generation as well, and all the more melancholy here.

"It's now over 18 months since he had his stroke. His sudden incapacity has left me facing considerable debt. We're living in a home where we can't afford the heat and the maintenance." See how things have changed? Most of us don't plan adequately, yet we contribute to pension plans and buy RRSPs.

"We have no bath or shower. Walking is impossible without a cane, and at nighttime manoeuvres are very dangerous in our home. We must move or renovate to reduce the overall cost." They are getting home support but, nonetheless, their life and their revenue picture has changed dramatically.

"We've been desperately looking for solutions that will allow us to pay our debts and retain our independence." That's what I hear from people. They really don't want to lose the dignity of independence, and most couples are stronger and their love is nourished by supporting one another if they can stay in their own home, maintain dignity—just what they're saying here, "without relying on government subsidies, a retirement home." It's essential that they sell all their possessions to stay afloat.

This couple has several hundred thousand dollars in life insurance. The children—dealing with estate matters becomes another very complex issue, but that's debate for another time. This fund has been paid in full. However, they themselves note that to access the funds needed, the payout, they have to die first. So it becomes an issue of the latter stages of life with the debilitating stroke of a partner and one of the spouses being driven into the ground because of the stress and pressures of a dramatic, sudden and unplanned change. This premium has been paid; however, they themselves note that to access the funds needed they would have to die.

"In closing, we've sponged off family and friends and have nowhere else to turn." They really have no other options, and perhaps this government has provided this family with a real option.

Certainly all members here have constituency offices, and all people in need, irrespective of their political point of view—that's not what those offices are for. My office in Bowmanville is there to serve the people, and that's

what we're there for. This legislation is another tool to help people live in independence and dignity. Perhaps there would be those here saying that in some respects I have a conflict, because I am getting to that point in life. I'm in my 57th year and hopefully will never need one of these. But none of us can plan every day of our lives. Every day of our lives is a gift, and we should cherish it and hold on to it. By the way, we should save as well for that rainy day.

What we've done is unlock some of that rainy-day money that my children might be anxiously looking for. I don't want to be cynical about the argument, but clearly this becomes an issue of making the choices to access those funds.

There are a couple of other issues on this bill that I think would be important to put on the record. I'm not certain if the member for Simcoe North addressed this, but CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, has clearly come out in support. I give a lot of the credit to their effective communication—some would refer to it as lobbying—with the government to force them to address this issue. I think we have to share the success with that group. I think the only thing that's reasonable to assume here is that government doesn't go about making legislative change without some motive.

I've tried to tell you before that we have the demographics of people living longer. The whole ball game has changed for people who thought Freedom 55 was a picture. But now we have very well organized groups representing various interests, one of which is CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, which I just mentioned. I have met with them, and I know Minister Jackson, when he was the minister responsible for seniors' issues, and I know that Minister Johns, the minister responsible for seniors' issues, would also be free to meet with those people. They bring those concerns raised by constituent groups to the cabinet table, and our minister and our Premier respond. Clearly Bill 27, this very small bill, is responding.

There is a section that the member for Simcoe North did mention, which I think is a tempest in a teapot. I'm going to digress for a moment and deal with it. It doesn't affect me. In fact, I'll say here publicly that in some ways I wish it did affect me, but it doesn't. There is no pension. It's gone, finished. There is no provincial pension. Whether that's a good or a bad thing is for future governments to decide. It was a decision of this government in 1995 to axe the pension.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Another promise we kept.

Mr O'Toole: That's right. It was a promise made and a promise kept. We were a bunch of naive MPPs at the time, and there are complications with that. But what they've done here is try to harmonize the rules. There are people who are 55 whose circumstances have changed, who are involved in what was the valid plan of the day. I have no problem with Floyd Laughren and Bob Rae, who served this House well—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, no, they did. I would say Mr Conway and others served this place well, with dignity and integrity. Those were the rules of the time, and if they got whatever they got, they were entitled to it and good for them. That's genuinely stated.

But I want to be clear and straightforward. Their circumstances are not unlike the circumstances I have just described. They're people. Their life needs and circumstances and demands changed. To artificially lock them into some set of rules—when they collect the money, they're going to pay tax. If they collect it in a lump and their marginal tax rate is X, guess what? It's taxed. And they should.

But I want to be perfectly clear for anyone who might be watching. Any current members in this House who did not serve before 1995 don't get one cent of pension. The provincial pension is gone. I want that to be understood. I'll tell you why. I may go off a little on this—I hope I don't get into too much trouble. I think we're not able to be labelled. Is that true, Mr Kwinter? I will say this in a general sense, though.

1930

In my riding of Durham—I won't mention any other names—it was quite an issue when the federal members' gold-plated pension was being dealt with. Most people would know that in Ontario all but one of the members are Liberals. The person elected prior to 1995 as the federal Liberal MP made a huge issue out of signing off the pension. I should make it clear for the record that, first, under the pension rules they are not entitled to a pension until the second term. So in fact when he said publicly he was resigning, he didn't resign because he wasn't entitled to it. That's an obsequious way in which politicians eventually lose their credibility.

I brought this up in a public forum, perhaps out of my own frustration and resentment, because no sooner was he elected the second term, bingo, he signed on to it. Then, five years after he's first elected, he made the unchallengeable claim that because he qualified, he made some assessment, he should re-enter the pension plan because he's now five years older, he'd given up this income and he should get the pension.

When I looked at our pension agreement in 1995—and I do have a financial background. I'm not an actuary and I'm not a registered insurance person, but I dealt with pension plans as a member of a personnel staff for some time. I find that in fact in some respects politicians need to be held accountable; it's those very demonstrated things that I just described, someone making an issue out of resigning and then re-engaging the pension, signing on to get it and then not even fully disclosing what their benefit is.

When we wrapped up the pension in 1995, there were those who, under the previous rules, were entitled to in excess of \$1 million. I have a couple of friends who are actuaries, and we looked at the pension reform issues. I talked to one on a personal level and on a professional level, and I could, for the record, name the person. He's very much involved with the actuaries of Ontario. He

showed me actuarially that a person like Bob Rae, at 51 getting \$1.3 million, would actually actuarially collect about \$3 million, and by him settling for one point something million, the taxpayers of Ontario were actually getting off the hook, because what they were doing really was buying an income fund for that person.

Without spending any more time on this issue, I think it should have been dealt with when the original pension was wrapped up. There are 60-some members involved, past, present and whatever. I think they have the right to the money, and if they want to take it, they should get taxed and it's finished. In fact, I would say to you in the House, my position on that is that they should have taken the 55 factor out, and if they want it—for instance, we had young members on both sides of the House at that time. Not to embarrass any members, but Chris Stockwell would be a fine example, perhaps, of a young person. He can choose to leave the funds in to mature or he can collect. What if one of those younger members got defeated and was unemployed? We know the record of many young members who are defeated and their success in the employment market is somewhat "diminished." What do they do with no pension and their pension is locked in and not accessible? I've made this point, I might say, in caucus that we shouldn't have excluded anyone. I would have made another provision, which I could talk to, but it isn't in this bill. I would have perhaps addressed that, but I don't need to.

I think it's important to dwell on the most fundamental parts of Bill 27. Despite what may or may not be said, I'm certain the members across—I know them to be members of fine character—will recognize that certainly there are portions of this bill that no one could argue with. The growing number of seniors in this province—it would be categorically a significant error to make. We all represent people, regardless of the party politics part of it, and I think that portion of the bill unquestionably is long overdue, it's important and it's necessary. It's clear, for all of the reasons I've given, that I would expect this would be passed unanimously.

Every piece of legislation of course is written by lawyers. In that respect, I always have questions. That it's languaged in such a way as to define the word "entitlement," I have to go to court to get half my money—I won't go off on that tangent. The regulations in this bill aren't here before us, and I'd certainly be interested in following rather rigorously what those definitions of "entitlement" were.

When they go through and talk about someone who has had an illness or has shown severe financial hardship, it's exactly at that point as a layperson that I would have plain-language definitions so that people's entitlement would not result in a \$10,000 legal bill to challenge that. I'm putting that on the record because I am an ordinary person and I'm an ordinary Ontarian. Basically, I feel that this legislation is attempting to address those particular people; I might be one of them.

Again I'm going back. Some of this definition stuff is important. As I conclude or draw near the conclusion—

financial hardship is one of the requirements, and funds locked in retirement accounts would be available to individuals in cases of serious financial hardship. I suspect you define the word "hardship" in regulation, and that's where I'd like to see the actual game finished. It's like leaving before the last five minutes of a basketball game: You really don't know what happened. The last five minutes of a basketball game, of course, is when everything happens.

Another part to it, in today's world of medical and health issues, is shortened life expectancy. I suspect there are more diseases that are diagnosed that are life threatening now. Perhaps before people used to just die suddenly. Now we have all sorts of detection technology that's able to warn people they're in the early stages of life-threatening disease and illness. For those people and their families and their support people to have access to funds, whether it's a LIF or LRIF, is an important entitlement. I've said this, and I'm repeating it for the record.

The elimination of the required annuity purchase, in other words, rather than buying an annuity, which is like a regular paycheque, you might say, out of some fund of money that you have, it may be a large savings, it may be some other registered retirement that you flip over into an annuity or purchase it or someone else purchases it for you, there is no longer a requirement to just purchase an annuity. You could in fact see a couple experiencing some difficulties and having to, as I said in that one example, move from their home into more appropriate accommodation that was designed for people who need supports. It could be a medical bed, medical equipment, wheelchairs, walkers, single-storey living, a whole bunch of issues that would be appropriate for them and their family, and then the issue becomes how much resources they have. I would hope that this does provide that resource for those people.

I'm a little bit surprised. We're always characterized as the buddies of big business, as Peter Kormos would like to say—I see him coming in there—but more importantly he would probably wonder why the insurance companies might be in some discomfort with this particular legislation, because really we've changed their rules. Like I said, you're going to have these funds about which some actuary said: "They're going to last this long. If you buy this business complex, you're going to get this return and you'll likely only have to pay out this much." I'm convinced even more assuredly that it's the right decision, because it is, after all, that individual or that couple or that family's money. If they're prepared to take it out and pay the essential tax portion of it, I think it's important.

1940

The federal investment rules portion here is something I'm reading—I have to comment on this—because I haven't read this section that well. Ontario is harmonizing its pension investment standards by adopting the federal investment rules. I think that's good. Any time you can harmonize—I don't want to get too far down that

road and bring out all the harmonization issues—as long as it's the right thing to do and it makes common sense, I think any person, particularly from this side of the House, would want to look fundamentally and say that maybe Ontario's suggestions are more of the way to harmonize.

We've got the issues flying off the walls. We've got the issue that I'm involved in as co-chair of the task force on the price of gas. I've looked at Mr Colle's bill and Mr Bradley's bill, and I've also looked at some other issues on that. On one hand they're saying that this is an Ontario problem; if I look at it, it's a federal problem and it's not politics—prices are out of whack in Newfoundland and they're out of whack in BC—and they should show some leadership. Naturally, as the largest part of the economy of this country, Ontario is leading the challenge. Think of all the revenue to Paul Martin that has come out of the 650,000 jobs created in Ontario. Those people are paying federal tax.

Getting back on track with the harmonizing issue here, quite often, under the leadership of some of our very fine civil servants, under what I believe is one of the best ministers of finance that this province has had in perhaps a decade or two, there are some important decisions. I was disappointed when the discussions about the Ontario Securities Commission and harmonizing some of the rules there were set aside, that they didn't want to follow Ontario's leads and recommendations, because we as the leader have some social responsibilities across this country to take the leadership.

I believe the current federal leadership isn't there. I don't say that disparagingly or politically. I don't think they're up to the job—or is that provincially? No, that's the federal. We have these lines that we use. No. I think that Paul Martin may serve as a nice segue from current leadership—without endorsing anyone, because I'm not a voting candidate, obviously, in that particular party.

That harmonization issue does bother me to some extent, but I'm confident that our minister and the civil servants will have looked at that to a very large extent. Federal investment rules harmonization I mentioned.

Streamlining of pension administration: This is a little techy, but it's a very important one. A number of reforms would be implemented to streamline the pension administration. The reforms respond to the submissions received during public consultations in February and March, very early in 1999. I believe member Skarica and Terence Young, no longer a member, led those consultations. A very important part of some of the administration issues that this legislation addresses was as a result of the public consultation process.

The Financial Services Commission of Ontario will provide details of these streamlining reforms through the Internet Web site and their Pension Bulletin early in the year 2000. I would say for the record that all members on all sides and in all parties will have this information in their constituency offices, so first of all, find out who your local member of provincial Parliament is. Contact that member regardless of their party affiliation. I'm certain they will be there to help you, and I'm sure you'll

realize that the legislation and the changes are as a result of this government's determination to help the seniors of this province and those people with shortened life expectancies. The important thing is the changes in annuities; locked-in provisions are important.

I think it's important to put one more testimonial on the record. The real stories are why we're here. As an elected member, I'm just that. I'm actually the person who's occupying that office that belongs to the person the people in Durham decide they want to represent them, and that's a temporary position. It's a position that I take very seriously and it's my first responsibility.

This is a story that I think is—"My disability pension is not enough to live on." We've heard that. "My health is getting worse. Financial planners say that I'd get money only if I was terminal. It's terminal, all right. When I die it's going to be because of the health problems I have now." So we have somebody who has a disability pension and their life expectancy is shortened. Those people then would, by definition, have access.

"A great many of us use all our savings and are just surviving on small, fixed incomes. This money would make our forced early retirement, forced through illness, less financially stressful and afford us a better quality of life." That's a real story of a couple who thought that retirement was going to be something. Their income is kind of locked in on some kind of pension fund. All of a sudden one of the partners gets ill and their supports and their costs are not what they had planned on, and so this legislation is there to help them.

It's like all legislation. I don't think it is without its problems, but I am confident this government is prepared to listen. This government is prepared to make the difficult decisions.

I want to thank the member for Wentworth-Burlington, Mr Skarica, who spoke earlier and did lead some of the consultations. I want to thank our minister for bringing this forward. As I said earlier, at this time of year, and also this year, 1999, the International Year of Older Persons—but I go right back to the beginning. I want to thank our Premier, and the Minister of Finance. That's the leadership that's listening. That's the leadership that's making the decisions at the cabinet table, putting the priorities down there. Legislation without controversy must be legislation that's innocuous.

Again, I'm really quite close to being finished here, and that's a relief for everyone. I share this with all members of caucus. There are a number of ministers and would-be ministers here tonight, and former ministers, I might say, and some of them will be speaking shortly. I think all members of the House will stand and perhaps pass this unanimously as a gesture of goodwill to men in this season of the year.

I always like to leave a little time in case I have more to say later. So with 40 seconds left on the clock, I'll relinquish the floor, believing that the point's been made.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I certainly want to congratulate the three members who spoke. They made some very interesting comments.

The member for Durham spoke about the harmonization of the rules between the federal and the provincial governments in this particular bill on this particular matter. I'm intrigued because he said that it was a desirable kind of quality and something that we should look forward to and encourage, yet I didn't hear him make an address when his Minister of Finance mentioned that Ontario would now be decoupling the Ontario tax system from the federal system. We have a harmonized system in place; we're now no longer going to have that. We're going to have twice the bureaucracy, twice the red tape. In fact, it's going to end up costing Ontario taxpayers quite a bit more.

I certainly agree with the member for Durham on the need for provincial, federal and, for that matter, municipal governments to work together.

I also want to comment because both the member for Durham and the member for Simcoe North made comments related to seniors and some of the promises that have been made by the Harris government. I remember one. It was in bold in their first election campaign document. It said that there would be no new user fees. I'm sure that the member for Simcoe North and the member for Durham have heard from seniors in their communities what the user fees for prescription drugs have meant for people in their ridings. I know I've certainly heard about that in Don Valley East. You see, we have a seniors population which is above the demographic which exists across the province. It has proven to be a significant hardship for many people. In fact, I know as well that in 1999, the International Year of Older Persons, both the member for Simcoe North and the member for Durham would want to comment on the changes to home and community care.

The Community Care Access Centre in North York, where I am a member and where the seniors in my community live, have had their hours cuts. They've had reductions to the level of service. I had an 80-year-old gentleman tell me that he could no longer provide the kind of care that his 82-year-old wife required. That's the kind of commitment that—

1950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I was rather pleased to hear the member for Durham—I'm not sure if he was quite trashing the insurance companies, but he did take a little swipe at them and I appreciate that. I have no qualms about taking shots at the insurance industry, taking swipes at it or, quite frankly, totally trashing it. As a matter of fact, I could live with a major set of alternatives to the private-sector, corporate, for-profit insurance industry. There's no ally to the insurance companies sitting over here in the seat from Niagara Centre.

I should indicate to you that our critic, David Christopherson, has deferred his leadoff on this. He will be speaking to this at the first opportunity after this evening. My colleague Rosario Marchese from Trinity-Spadina of course—and he's well known to people in his

riding and across the province—will be speaking to this bill in the brief time allowed to him in a very few short minutes. So if people would please wait until Rosario Marchese has a chance to address this, he'll give a different perspective.

At 9 o'clock I'm going to be over at CITY-TV. That's channel 57, cable 7 down in Niagara. So, folks in Niagara interested in what's going on at CITY-TV this evening at 9 o'clock, I'll be on there with Frances Nunziata, and I would invite people to tune in from 9 to 10 this evening on CITY-TV, channel 57, cable 7 down in Niagara. I'm sure folks will find it extremely interesting.

I do very briefly want to mention the interest expressed by CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. I want to tell them and any of their membership that I am very well aware of the huge efforts they make on behalf of seniors and retirees, and I appreciate the comments they've made to the press with respect to this bill. I look forward to hearing more.

You'll be hearing from Rosario Marchese in a few minutes. I'll be on CITY-TV, channel 57, cable 7, at 9 pm.

The Deputy Speaker: That's a political announcement. The Chair recognizes the minister for children.

Hon Margaret Marland (Minister without Portfolio [Children]): I certainly wasn't planning to make any comments, but you get so enthusiastic about hearing all the other comments that it's very hard to withstand the bait. I guess I am rising somewhat to debate for the member for Niagara Centre, who actually stood in this House at one time—I think it was for maybe 17 hours non-stop—and conducted a filibuster. I can even tell you where he sat.

Mr Kormos: I stood.

Hon Mrs Marland: Stood. Pardon me. Correct. He stood for 17 hours non-stop in the back row over there and read one pink slip telephone message after another when he was fighting for government-run automobile insurance. That was when he was in the opposition. And then he became the government.

When he became the government, he also was the minister until he posed, fully dressed, in the centrefold of the Toronto Sun, as I recall. History is actually a very interesting thing in this place, and I would suggest to this member that when he says he is no friend of the insurance companies, in fact, as a member of Premier Bob Rae's cabinet, he never pursued government-run automobile insurance. I find it interesting that now he is simply serving the purpose of being here to plug his television appearances later on tonight for those members in the Niagara region who would choose to watch.

I would suggest that he really still makes a contribution in his own way from time to time, but somewhat questionably, I understand, in some things that he says. That's what I heard.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I was glad this evening that the member from Durham brought up gasoline prices, because they certainly are of concern to all of us in Ontario, but perhaps at times more particularly to

seniors who are on fixed incomes. I hope that if the latest version of gas-busters can find collusion among the oil companies, they will in fact bring it to the attention of the federal government because it is their responsibility.

But the member well knows that he lives in the province that has the highest rate of gasoline tax in the country, number one, and secondly, that gasoline pricing is under the purview of the provincial government. I've watched very closely the experience in Prince Edward Island, where they in fact control gasoline prices because it is a provincial issue. I would hope that on conclusion and when they bring the report forward, number one, if there is collusion among the major oil companies and they prove that, information be given to the federal government, and I will be right with you to have the federal government act upon it.

But if they don't find collusion and gasoline prices are still too high for our seniors in this province, I would expect then that Mike Harris will make good the comment he made over a year ago, in September 1998 I believe it was, that he will bring the oil companies to heel because he knows gasoline pricing is the responsibility and comes under the jurisdiction of the provincial government. I will also help the latest version of gas-busters, if they find that's the case, to make sure that Mike Harris brings those oil companies to heel.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr O'Toole: I want to acknowledge all of those who were listening attentively and took the time to respond. I must take two issues, one with the member from Don Valley East. Harmonization is a federal tax grab. You only have to look at the current issues where they're harmonizing provincial and federal taxes. Really, it is to impose more tax on more items. Our Premier said he's here to cut tax, not to increase tax, but of course the Liberals at any level, federal, provincial or municipal, for that matter, love taxes.

The member from Niagara Centre, I'm actually probably more interested in his comments, but I can't wait for the member from Trinity-Spadina. I love his oratory; his content's rather dubious nonetheless.

The member from Mississauga South of course is right on message, but I must take some exception with the member from Essex on the issue of gas. For the record, he's categorically wrong.

Ms Mushinski: He's full of it. Right?

Mr O'Toole: No, no. I should tell you, I co-chair that. You know that and it's important that you know the correct information. I'm not trying to be smart. I don't criticize you for not knowing. How would you know? But the highest provincial tax—the province of Ontario by far is one of the lower, in the lower quartile. The provinces that are higher have the harmonized tax because the tax goes on the whole package.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, no. Their provincial tax, when you wrap it up at 15%, you whack it on the whole bill. Do you understand? Ontario's is not a tax; it's a flat tax.

I have a couple of things to tell you. First of all, the highest is Newfoundland and, second of all, your government raised the tax from 8.3% up to 10%, and they raised it to 14.7%. We've frozen it. You raised it; we've frozen it.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Crozier: I'm pleased to stand to debate Bill 27 this evening because, if nothing else, it gives my wife Joan at home an indication of when I'm done speaking and that I'll be there in four hours.

I really have to point out that I'm going to share my time with the member from York Centre and the member from Kingston and the Islands. In fact, I would like to have the whole time to debate this because the issue of gasoline taxes and their effect on seniors and pensioners and those who need more pension money comes to the front.

Mr O'Toole: He's actually cut taxes.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Durham, come to order.

Mr Crozier: I have here—I think it was when Mike Harris was in government in 1981—where he voted for a fuel tax increase on gasoline of a cent, on diesel fuel of 1.1 cents. At that time, it resulted in a \$135-million tax grab. In the 1982 budget, they decided to increase retail sales tax, OHIP premiums, tobacco tax and beverage tax. Mike Harris voted for that, I'm sure. In 1983, again they increased OHIP premiums and they increased taxes on alcohol and tobacco. Corporation income tax was increased. Mike Harris voted for that, and the social maintenance tax came out. In 1984, when Mike Harris was also around this place, he voted to increase OHIP premiums and water power charges. We're not all without having some blemish when it comes to taxes.

2000

But more to the point is the bill we have before us this evening, Bill 27. Earlier this year, as all members know because we all received a copy of it, back in February the Ministry of Finance issued a consultation paper, entitled Harmonization and Streamlining of Pension Administration and Regulation in Ontario. It was a significant step towards determining what changes may be suggested to the Pension Benefits Act in Ontario. Much of what this act contains is a result of this consultation paper.

Following the government's commitment in the 1998 budget, we are told by a press release from the Ministry of Finance, they have moved through the development of some of these pension benefits regulations. As the Ministry of Finance has pointed out, this bill should provide individuals with more flexibility in determining their annual withdrawals from locked-in retirement savings plans. These are all individuals in Ontario.

The reform package that's being presented to us streamlines pension administration, which I don't think any of us would argue with. It's expected that the regulations regarding shortened life expectancy, the locked-in retirement income fund and the withdrawal of small balances will be enacted early in the new year.

The member from Simcoe North, as a matter of fact, mentioned this, although he mentioned it in the context of being a Christmas present. We're only, what, 16 days away from Christmas. Obviously this bill will take a few days to get passed. I don't think it's going to be a Christmas present in quite the context he meant because of the regulations that aren't contained in the bill. We're told those will be brought forward in the new year.

I only point out from a personal point of view that I sincerely wish regulations more often accompanied the legislation because, as we often know, the devil is in the details. I'm interested in knowing what "shortened life expectancy" will be defined as. We look at it as perhaps, if someone has a catastrophic illness, it's going to be difficult to define exactly what that is because everybody's circumstance is different. What might be a catastrophic illness under one circumstance may either result in a shortened life expectancy, or that person hopefully may be cured and not suffer quite so extremely from that shortened life expectancy.

"Financial hardship" too I think is going to be a difficult one. Again, it was mentioned by the member from Simcoe North that somebody might have a cottage—I think it was given in that context—and those of us who don't have cottages might say, "Well, I don't know to what extent someone's cottage should be protected in allowing them to withdraw pension funds." I don't know that a cottage is something that everyone in life should expect to have. I don't know whether it's a right that any of us should have. "Financial hardship" is going to be a difficult one to define. Once those regulations are drawn and put into effect and once there's some experience, you can rest assured that someone will come into our offices and will have what they describe under their circumstances of life as a financial hardship. So we'll certainly be looking forward to the definitions that are made under those two categories, "shortened life expectancy" and "financial hardship."

We, in the few days we've had this bill, have been able to review the bill. It has raised some questions. It has, in our view, satisfied some of the concerns of constituents who come to our offices. I think as we go through the second reading debate of this bill we are going to find that there are more questions that have to be raised; perhaps we can have some time in public hearings or in committee, where those questions can be answered and amendments proposed to the legislation that will allow us to improve on this piece of legislation.

The Pension Benefits Act itself is a large construct that guides the administration of private sector pension plans, for the most part. It doesn't really spell out the entitlements and the contributions under the plan, but it does provide a framework covering such issues as employers and employees sharing contributions, the assignment of benefits for early retirement, minimum terms and contributions, surpluses etc. So the Pension Benefits Act is really a large guidebook to how the province feels pension plans should be administered and carried out in Ontario. It would perhaps interest some to

know that the Pension Benefits Act doesn't cover OMERS, OPSEU and the teachers' pension plan—several huge pension plans in Ontario that are not covered under the Pension Benefits Act; whether they should be may be something for discussion as we go through with this legislation.

In this act—as was pointed out earlier, it's a relatively short one; it's nine pages long—there are a number of small amendments, a number of technical amendments that we certainly have no quarrel with. But the substantive amendments to the Pension Benefits Act will allow early payouts from pensions, as I mentioned earlier, for catastrophic illness. I think that requirement has been needed for some time. I only caution that we need to define as best we can what a catastrophic illness is, so there's no abuse, yet at the same time it should provide the benefits that some people need when they do have a serious life-threatening, sometimes life-ending, illness.

As well, there are provisions in this act to allow paying out the entire accrued value of an individual's share in a plan in the case of financial hardship. That again we'll have to take a close look at. I would have hoped those regulations would have accompanied the bill, so we could discuss them in their entire context.

Lastly, there's a provision allowing spouses or same-sex partners to waive their entitlement to pre-retirement death benefits in order to direct the payments to other individuals. I suggest that those amendments as well came from the consultations that were carried out earlier this year, yet when this bill gets to committee we'll have the opportunity to review them again, and those who may not have been consulted the first time will have the opportunity to comment on them.

2010

There are, though, some controversial amendments to the legislation that affect pension buyback provisions. As you know, Speaker, the practice has been that if an employee wishes to buy back additional years of contributions to move up their date of entry into a pension plan, usually in order to meet future entitlement requirements, the employer has usually contributed 50% of the cost.

The amendments to the Pension Benefits Act that we're discussing take out that requirement for employers to contribute that 50%. It can be argued, I'm sure successfully in some cases, that that provision under the Pension Benefits Act resulted in some employers simply not offering buyback provisions. If, through discussions in committee, we can determine that it has resulted in fewer people in Ontario being offered pension buybacks, then that may be good reason that it should be excluded. But I hope that most employers will continue to look at the needs of their employees and will offer to contribute 50% to the pension buyback if an employee chooses to do that.

We suggest, or at least ask, if this is being changed to provide discretionary authority to employers as to whether they want to participate in the buyback, or if the government says this will encourage more buyback

opportunities, as previously employers were opposed to having to foot 50% of the cost. Maybe it will make more employers offer that option to employees, where it's been left out of plans until now. Conversely, though, it can be argued that without an employer contribution there is no incentive for an employee to spend the full cost of a buyback provision. In the next few days or weeks before this bill goes to committee, I hope we are able to get some of that information and be able to better judge whether it will reduce or increase the offers for buybacks.

We think this confuses the matter a bit, in that the government compendium—the information given to us with the bill when it's printed—says this clarifies the existing rules, while the explanatory notes with the bill say employers are now forced to fund 50% of the buyback. So we don't know whether they are forced to do this or merely encouraged to do it. When this bill goes to committee and when we have third reading debate, I hope we have some of those answers and I hope the government will help us provide those answers.

The way the amendment on buybacks actually works in relation to benefit requirements, and not planned contribution payments—there's been a general, long-standing rule, as I mentioned, that the employee must not be required to pay more than 50% of a plan's original contribution premiums before investment growth, and buybacks without employer contributions would often eventually break the 50% rule. Now, debate in this Legislature is no place to go into this, because pension plans are very technical and the Pension Benefits Act is a very technical document. But we want to make sure that if the employer not making contribution breaks the rule where employer contributions would require employees to pay more than 50% into the plan, we want to have a close look at it.

I want to talk for just a few minutes about the MPPs Pension Act amendments. The member from Simcoe North said, and I think I understand what he meant, that MPPs must be retired and over the age of 55. In my view, that means retired as an MPP, not fully retired. Again, that is something we're going to have to clarify. It's my understanding that you can continue other employment, ie, someone could be appointed to a government agency, board or commission and then be able to collect their pension. So we have to clarify what is meant by "retired." I think it just means you have to be retired as an MPP and over the age of 55.

The existing act requires that the value of MPP pension benefits be transferred to a locked-in retirement account and be subject to the requirements of the Pension Benefits Act, and also that benefits cannot be paid out until the later of age 55 or when the individual ceases to be an MPP. That's why I think that's really what they mean by "retired."

A concern I have, though, is that when the golden pension plan was axed, it did come under the Pension Benefits Act. What this does is remove MPPs from the Pension Benefits Act. I'm concerned that it will treat MPPs differently from the rest of the citizens of Ontario.

Let me give you an example. Earlier there was mention about some of the rather large payouts that were made when the MPPs Pension Act was wound up. It's my understanding that by removing MPPs from the Pension Benefits Act, someone, it was suggested, if paid \$1 million will be able to remove that whole \$1 million. I'm not sure at this point, and we'll save that for later in debate and in committee, that the citizens of the province of Ontario enjoy that same flexibility.

In my view, a former MPP shouldn't enjoy any more privilege when it comes to access to pension benefits than any other citizen of Ontario. So I hope in the weeks to come we'll be able to determine some of this, that we'll be able to ask questions of the government and other experts, and that we'll have those answers when it comes to clause-by-clause in committee and debate on third reading.

With that, I'll turn the time over to someone who is much more experienced when it comes to pensions in the province of Ontario, the former, as the minister referred, great minister of the Liberal Party, my friend from York Centre.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I'm delighted to participate in this debate. It's true, I do have a passing interest in this issue.

On December 9, 1986—by sheer coincidence, 13 years to the day—I introduced Bill 170, when I was Minister of Financial Institutions, and it was An Act to revise the Pension Benefits Act. At the time it was introduced, it was the largest act ever to be introduced and also had the distinction of being the first under Bill 8 that was fully translated in French. That bill was 67 pages long, and it is still the basis for pension legislation in Ontario.

Pensions and pension regulation is a living organism. It has to be, because things change. To give you an example, we are now looking at amendments to the act that contemplate same-sex individuals getting benefits. In 1986 that wasn't even on the radar screen; it wasn't something that anyone would even contemplate. Things change, and I think it would be interesting to point out, historically, the impetus and what happened and why this evolution in pensions is taking place.

2020

The big issue in 1986, and I'm sure my colleague—*Interjection.*

Mr Kwinter: No, I was looking to see if Mr Kormos was there, because he would have certainly been aware of it. The issue was this: There are two types of pensions. One is known as a defined benefit plan and one is known as a defined contribution plan. Under the defined benefit plan the employer, the pension manager, tells you as an employee what you're going to get. It is a promise of financial compensation under certain terms and conditions at a certain time. So you knew, and we used to have that in the legislation, when you retired and when you got to age 55 you got a fixed amount of income for the rest of your life. That was a promise that was made and, in most cases, it was a promise kept because the pension com-

mission monitored those funds to make sure that they were actuarially sound. That's a defined benefit plan.

The other type of plan, and this is the more common today, is the defined contribution plan. You put money into a plan, the managers invest the money and whatever that return is, that's the return you get. It's just like when you buy an RRSP and if you buy it through a mutual fund, or whatever it is, you take your chances as to what your return is going to be depending on the market. It's a little riskier because you don't have a defined amount that you know you're going to get.

What happened in that time and what was the impetus for the total restructuring of the Pension Benefits Act in Ontario is that companies would take the responsibility of managing that act. What they would do is they would put their money into the pension plan and, because of an anomaly in the tax regime, any money that they put in they wouldn't have to pay tax on. Many companies actually overloaded the plan to get some tax relief. They would administer it and they would have professional managers who would manage this fund. When the time came for an employee to retire, regardless of how the fund did, that employee got his pension benefit. Sometimes the plan was in deficit—it didn't matter—the company had an obligation to make that commitment good. Other times there was a huge surplus and that was accrued to the managers.

What happened is that suddenly someone got wind of this—I mean, it wasn't hidden, but they suddenly realized that this was an issue. The famous case, at the time I was the minister, that triggered this was Conrad Black and Dominion stores. He had made application to the pension board to withdraw a substantial amount of money from the pension plan and of course labour, unions, others cried foul and said, "That money belongs to the employees."

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. There is another place for it, not in here.

Mr Kwinter: The company said: "We were at risk; we managed the fund; we put the money in. We have fulfilled our commitment and as a result the money belongs to us." This was a cause célèbre in those days and, let me tell you, it was a major concern. As a result of that, the amendments were brought in to the pension benefit plan to make sure that when a pension plan was structured, there had to be a provision in that plan that indicated where any surpluses were to go. Up until that time that wasn't the case, and when it went to court, the court ruled in favour of Mr Black and said that they said they were the ones that were at risk and if they made a profit by managing it well, and as long as they made their commitments that they had contracted to do, the money belonged to them. Now, of course, there are very few defined benefit plans, but the ones that are in effect, under this act, now indicate how any surpluses or any deficits are to be assigned. That was the major impetus, that was why we went through this huge act, and while

we were at it, we restructured to bring up to date the requirements of the Pension Benefits Act.

Governments normally—and I have to say this with a bit of reservation because sometimes I think this government does not follow that rule—don't get up and say, "Who are we going to get today?" and decide to do something just for the sake of doing it. They usually respond to a need, and at that particular time, that was a huge need. It was a very difficult situation, very charged, and that is why that was done.

Now we have another set of circumstances. I am totally sympathetic to the aspirations of the Canadian Association of Retired Persons to be able to restructure the way they handle their money as they age. It's very simple: People are living a lot longer, people are working a lot longer, and they are confronted with making some decisions that may be to their detriment, and by allowing that flexibility, it really addresses a major concern. I am totally supportive of that. I think it's long due. But again, in 1986 it wasn't an issue.

You should know that things change. In the 1980s, when labour-management negotiations were taking place, the major issues on the table were hours of work and rates of pay. That was it. They weren't terribly interested in anything else; that's all they really wanted to negotiate. As people came to grips with their mortality, and when the economy went into a bit of a slump where they couldn't justify increasing wages, the unions shifted their attention and the big issue was pensions. Usually the young employee would say: "What do I care about my pension? It's 40 or 50 years away. I want my money now. I want to be able to get my income now so I can go out and do the things that I want." As they got a little older they suddenly realized, "I'd better start worrying about my old age and making sure that I'm going to be able to financially survive when my wage-earning years are over." As a result, these packages were enhanced.

You have to also understand that pensions are a vehicle of social policy. The reason that governments encourage pensions is self-serving, because, you know, "You pay me now or pay me later." If people don't have pensions, and when they get to the point when their earning time is over and they suddenly are in dire straits, they are going to be looking to their government to provide them with assistance. What happens is that there is a provision and an incentive for people to save for their old age and that incentive is: Put the money away under a formula and you don't have to pay any tax. As your wage-earning years decline, you can take that money out and get taxed at a much lower rate because you won't be earning as much money. That is the rationale for government involvement in pensions. It's a matter of social policy.

In order to keep that whole—and we've often heard about how the CPP is bankrupt or that people won't be able to get old age pensions—governments have to make sure that, actuarially, they are sound. The minute you start tampering with that, it changes all the parameters. We have a provision now that is put forward in Bill 27

which provides for catastrophic illness and financial hardship, both of which I am very sympathetic to. I've had constituents come in and tell me that they have X thousands of dollars in an RRSP or in a pension, their house is being foreclosed upon, and if they don't get the money, they are going to lose their house. What good is having a pension they're going to be able to access 20 years from now when they're losing their house now? I'm totally sympathetic to that, and I think that aspect of these amendments is commendable and necessary.

2030

Where I have the concern, and my colleague from Essex touched on it, is that it then boils down to a means test. What is the catastrophic illness that qualifies? Who makes that decision? Who makes the decision where someone may be profligate and wants to go to Las Vegas, or if they're really conscientious, they'll go to Windsor, take their money and think they're going to hit the jackpot and really get on to Easy Street? Then, of course, if they lose it, what happens? You're back in exactly the same position. This person is going to be in financial trouble, no longer has a pension to fall back on, and how do you deal with that?

It's the same thing with catastrophic illness. There's no question that if someone is terminally ill and is in an incapacitated position, there's got to be some realization and some compassion.

I will be anxious to see the regulations as to how that's going to be addressed, because I think it's critical that we not set up an environment where there will be abuses. We hear constantly, and we heard it today where the Minister of Community and Social Services was flashing a gold credit card, where this person was on welfare and yet had a gold credit card. The minute you open up a loophole, it widens to the point where you can drive a truck through it. I think it's important that we understand that it's going to take some very deft regulations to make sure that in cases that are absolutely in need, we can respond, but we also have to make sure that the whole pension system remains whole; otherwise, we are going to be creating as many problems as we are attempting to solve. So I think it's important that we do that.

I also want to spend a bit of time on the MPPs' pension. The member from Durham has left. I don't disagree with the fact that MPPs' pensions are gone, but I felt he gave the impression to some of the viewers that the members here are getting zero, that they don't get anything, when in fact the government does contribute on a matching basis to their RRSPs. That is a form of participation by the government, and all members have that provision. It's not a big deal, but I just wanted to make sure that was clarified, that people understood that that happened.

What I find difficult in the MPPs' pension provisions is the ambiguity. People make the argument, "MPPs are at greater risk than most people because they come here and then they leave and they're in mid-career and they've got to get some sort of an accommodation for their particular problem." I say to you, with all due respect,

that we are no different than many people who are not MPPs, people who, for whatever reason, are caught up in downsizing, where companies where they think they're going to be for many years suddenly announce to them, "Sorry, we're cutting 2,000 employees and we're giving you a severance package," and they don't have that ability.

As I say, the material I have seen is confusing. It says on the one hand that they will not be able to access their pensions until they are 55 or retired, whichever is later. If that's the case, there's no need to provide any special provision. There are lots of pension plans that have an 80 factor, which is years of service plus age. Particularly because of the trend to downsizing, there are many people who are very young who are given buyouts, given early pension packages, all of these things.

It would seem to me that this requires some further refinement as to exactly what is the intent of these provisions, because it seems on the surface that they're aimed at a very few people who, because of circumstance, are no longer members of this place and may feel they would like to access this money earlier than at age 55.

I want to make sure that this isn't perceived as a special provision that applies only to MPPs and not to others. Obviously if we approve these amendments, and the provisions say that if someone is in financial difficulty, they can do it whether they're an MPP or not—if they have a catastrophic physical illness, they can do it whether they're an MPP or not. I haven't quite come to terms as to why there is a special provision for MPPs. What is the intent? I just don't understand that. That's why I have some concerns.

Quite frankly, notwithstanding that I really support much of what is in here, if that isn't resolved to my satisfaction—this bill will be passed, obviously; if the government is going to put it forward, they will get it passed—I would certainly want to be on the record as opposing it if I do not get a satisfactory answer as to why there has to be a special provision for MPPs. There may be one, and I would like to hear it, but so far, in the material and in the act that I've read and the notes accompanying the act, they are confusing. As a matter of fact, they are contradictory and I haven't quite, in my mind, resolved why this is being done.

I would caution the members on the opposite side and the minister and the people in the ministry to make sure they have a coherent, clear rationale for why this is being done, particularly when you take a look at Bill 170, the bill I introduced on December 9, 1986, where there was absolutely no mention of MPPs, no mention of any particular group other than pensioners. It was totally universal across the whole field of pensions. Why are we now singling out MPPs, and not only MPPs but a very small number who could have access to this provision? Those are things I would like to find out.

I did want to thank the members who have spoken so far. I think this is an important amendment. I think it addresses a major concern, but I want to make sure that

it's done right so it doesn't create as many problems as it solves.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I would like to congratulate the member for York Centre for an excellent presentation, not only about what this bill is all about but also what the earlier legislation he introduced some 13 years ago today was all about. I guess it shows you how times change and circumstances change. We live in an aging society, we live in a society where people live longer, and as a result of that, they are looking much more at their pension rights and entitlements, when they get them and what they can do with them, rather than the pure salary and wage concerns that many were involved in for many years before that.

I, too, would like to address this whole MPPs Pension Act situation. I don't think it's been made clear enough tonight as yet, although the member from Durham referred to it earlier. When we're talking about the MPPs Pension Act, we're talking about those individuals who were in the House prior to 1995 and who received, in most cases, a substantial amount of money when that gold-plated plan was closed down.

2040

I always find it a bit ironic that Mike Harris ran on the Common Sense Revolution for fewer politicians and let's get rid of the gold-plated pension plan, but as a result of scrapping the plan there were at least 61 members on all sides in this House who benefited from it quite substantially, all the way up from \$100,000 that went into the plan in some cases to well over \$1 million. I often say to myself that I don't think this is what the public had in mind when they thought they were going to scrap the pension plan; that it was going to cost the coffers of the province some \$20 million to \$25 million to get rid of the pension entitlements of those 61 individuals.

There was a problem with the previous pension plan, no question about it. Generally speaking, people found it very difficult to understand why somebody should get a pension at a very young age, particularly for those members who came here at a very young age and may have been defeated or gone on to some other activity in life at age 40 or 45 and were able to immediately get pension entitlements etc. However, I don't think the intention ever was that people should be getting the payouts they did. All right, that was it. So when we talk about the MPPs pension plan we're talking about all those individuals who were here prior to 1995, and some of whom may still be here. As the member for Durham so aptly pointed out, there is no pension plan for people who started here in 1995, or at any time in the foreseeable future. What the government does is put, depending on what your stipend is here, somewhere between \$4,000 and \$5,000 per year into an RRSP.

In my case, for example—and I'm more than willing to share that—after the four and a half years I've served here, and I'm sure this goes for most members who came in 1995, my latest statement was an entitlement of something like \$23,000, period; not per annum, but in total. That's all there was in the RRSP.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): That's good.

Mr Gerretsen: The member across says, "That's good." I don't have any problem with it, sir, but there are many people in the general public who somehow still think that MPPs get a pension. I run into it all the time, "You've been there five years, now you're going to get a pension." I have to tell them, no, the pension plan was scrapped. When we talk about the MPP pension plan here, we're talking about the plan that exists for those individuals who were here prior to 1995.

The interesting thing that I find about this piece of legislation—and the government has done this before—is that you tied two pieces of legislation together, one being a very good piece, which is the one that deals with the Pension Benefits Act itself—and we've heard a lot about that for people who get a catastrophic illness or people who go into a financial downturn and are in financial difficulties, that they should be accessing their pension money earlier. That's a good idea. We've already heard about it in a very eloquent way from the member for Essex and the member for York Centre. But what they've tied into this is the MPPs Pension Act for the people who were here prior to 1995, which is in direct contradiction to what the Pension Benefits Act is trying to accomplish.

Just let me read right from the very first line of the compendium. This is a government document about what may happen with the MPPs pension plan. "The bill would eliminate the requirement to comply the MPPs Pension Act with the Pension Benefits Act and remove the restrictions on the amount a member can withdraw from his or her account." In other words, the second part of this act, dealing with MPPs who were here prior to 1995, is being exempted from the very act that they're changing.

Let's be fair about this. If there was ever a case where a piece of legislation needed to be severed, surely this is it. How in one piece of legislation can you say you're going to make necessary changes in the Pension Benefits Act which are for the betterment of seniors in this province and at the same time say you're going to make changes to the MPPs pension plan so that it doesn't have to comply with the act that you're going to change?

It kind of reminds me of a lot of the legislation that's passed in the States. You always hear about this on newscasts where they say Congressman X would only vote for it if there was also a bill attached to a particular act which would do this, that or the other thing in his riding at public expense of so many dollars. I don't know what they call that, gerrymandering or whatever. You get enough riders in there to suit individual members in their ridings so that you can get the main piece of legislation passed. This is the same thing. I really have some major problems with treating the MPPs and their pension plan, for those people who were here prior to 1995, in a manner which is significantly different from the manner in which other people in this province are being treated. That is my main concern with this act.

I'm sure that many people back in 1995, when the MPPs Pension Act was changed at that point in time, would have had no difficulty at all if the old plan had continued to exist with no further contributions after 1995 and be paid out to the individual members at their normal retirement age. We heard something to the effect that the government is saving \$4 million to \$5 million per year since the MPPs pension plan no longer exists. As we already know, it cost about \$25 million to buy it out. But there's the other argument as well, and that is that that money didn't have to be paid out immediately. Not all of these people who were here prior to 1995 were going to retire on the same day.

It kind of reminds me of my municipal days when people used to talk about unfunded liabilities in the sense of, what would happen if every firefighter retired on the same day, or every policeman, and you needed these millions of dollars to pay their pensions? It just doesn't happen that way in real life. In real life you have a number of people retiring in a fairly systematic fashion, and those people should be getting their entitlements at that point in time.

So the question I have is, why was it necessary to pay all the MPPs out in 1996 or 1997? Why couldn't they just have waited and seen what would happen at their retirement? Maybe they would have gotten more money if they live to 85 or 90. But maybe they would have gotten less money.

I realize, and to be totally fair about it, the situation was totally different. Generally speaking, MPPs now make more money than what they made prior to 1995. When you look at the salary structure that was in effect then, it was kind of like a sports contract, a hockey or a baseball contract. The way we used to pay MPPs is they got their general stipend, I think it was around \$36,000 to \$40,000 per year, and then you got paid extra for sitting on committees, and of course if you were in cabinet you got a substantial amount extra, which is still the case now. They certainly weren't as well paid as we are now, but on the other hand it was like a deferred payment plan that was set up. The way I figured it out was that just about for every year the member served here, on average—for at least five years. You had to be here for five years or else you weren't part of the old pension plan. But if you were here for at least five years, on average, you got about \$25,000, up to \$50,000, for every year you were here. It was like saying, "We pay \$35,000, and we pay somewhere between \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year in a deferred plan at some point in time in the future when you retire." It was very hefty, no question about it, as we found out when we paid out all the MPPs who were here prior to 1995.

2050

I don't want to belabour this but I think it is unfair of the government to, in effect, put these two bills together. You cannot put a bill from which the general public benefits with a bill in which you say these specific individuals, former MPPs or MPPs, are going to be exempted. That, to me, is not the right way to do it, because

it places the individual MPPs in this place in a very precarious position.

You may very well be very much in favour of the general amendments to the Pension Benefits Act. I certainly am. I think that people who are suffering catastrophic illnesses or financial problems in their lives ought to be helped and should be able to access money to which they are entitled. To tie that in with what I clearly perceive to be an advantage to those MPPs who are benefiting from the MPPs Pension Act is unfair, because they are dealing with two completely different issues.

The other point that has been made is that the regulations—and I heard the parliamentary assistant talk about this earlier—are going to be passed in January and February. I have some difficulty with that. We all know—what's the expression? The devil is in the details? It's the regulations, whatever they are going to be, that are going to spell it out, and are definitely more important than what is in the act, because that is how the different plans and individuals will be affected on an ongoing basis.

I think the point was very well made by the member for York Centre when he said, "How do you define a catastrophic illness?" Is it an illness where a doctor, for example, says that there is no likelihood of somebody getting better over a period of time, or are we talking about an illness that may affect somebody for a short period of time but may be very financially detrimental to that individual? That's on the health and welfare side.

When we start looking at the other side, at those people who are in financial distress at any one time, I think the point he makes is an excellent one. How do you cut people off? If it's really their money, who is going to judge that, "You are in financial distress, and you are not"? How are you going to come up with regulations that are fair to every individual involved? I think there are some great difficulties here. There should be public debate on the regulations. It should go to hearings.

In a perfect world you would almost say that the regulations should be in place prior to the act being passed so that you know exactly what the government has in mind in defining these two terms and what kinds of situations are covered. Certainly the views of an organization like CARP are extremely important.

I've come to the conclusion in dealing with a fair number of elderly people that most people when they retire are in spending mode, if I can put it that way. Most people who retire look after finances very well, but their ability to do things, their ability to take vacations, their ability to stay down south for a period of time, lasts for a certain number of years after their retirement—maybe 20 or 15 years. But usually by about age 80 or 85, in some cases later, their activity, their desire to do things lessens, usually because of physical detriments, physical state or physical condition.

So I will come to the end of my speech here in a moment, but I will once again—

Applause.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm glad that the former minister from Scarborough Centre is applauding this because I'm sure she agrees with me that MPPs, whether they were here prior to 1995 or after 1995, should not be treated any differently from other seniors.

Ms Mushinski: They're not.

Mr Gerretsen: But she's saying that they're not. Let me just remind her once again of the very first line in the compendium, which is your government document. It says that this bill would eliminate the requirement of MPPs' pensions to comply with the PBA and remove the restrictions on the amount a member can withdraw from his or her account. I would like her to explain, and perhaps she'll get an opportunity in her two-minute response, why MPPs should be treated differently. Again, we're talking about those MPPs who were here prior to 1995. Why should we pass a bill that is to the benefit of the general senior population of this province and in this same bill in effect say, yes, but those provisions of the MPPs Pension Act, those individuals who benefit under that, are not going to be part of the new Pension Benefits Act? It doesn't make sense.

I don't know. I almost think that maybe the first act is being brought in so that the second act, or the second part of the act, would not have to be brought in on its own merits. Hopefully that's not the case.

So I too look forward to some hearings on this situation. Maybe the government can explain why those MPPs, those 61 individuals who were here prior to 1995, ought to be treated differently from the rest of the general public. Perhaps the ministers who are in the House right now—and I'm sure there have been some very heated discussions about this around the cabinet table as to why they ought to be treated differently. Not those individuals who are in the House right now, because all of them came after 1995 so they're not part of this, but why the ones who were here before should be treated differently from the general population out there. I would like somebody to get up and say that. In about a minute and a half you will have the opportunity to say that.

I am positive that the general public out there, when they heard Mike Harris talking about getting rid of the gold-plated pension plan, never thought of the possibility that 60 members who were here at the time were able to draw somewhere between \$20 million and \$25 million. They are not my figures. They were the figures from the member for Durham earlier today. It's kind of like saying, "I'm the Taxfighter but, by the way, let me make sure that we've got our money."

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: What does Bradley think about this?

Mr Gerretsen: There are members on all sides, absolutely, of this House who are benefiting significantly from this. I can remember the way this was discussed three or four years ago. It was on the basis that they wouldn't be able to get at the money, so it wasn't really like giving the money. Look what's happening now.

Three years later, lo and behold, we're going to open it right up, wide open.

I will leave it at that because there are four eminent cabinet ministers in the House right now and I'm sure they will take an opportunity to explain to the people of Ontario why MPPs who were here prior to 1995 ought to be treated differently than other individuals under the Pension Benefits Act.

The Deputy Speaker: I realize it's getting a little late at night and so on. I'd like you all to stay here. I'm very patient, but I would like each one of you to consider this a warning: I'll not tolerate the talking back and forth.

Comments and questions?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): That was a very serious intervention, Speaker, and I'm happy to see you do that from time to time.

I have very little to say in these two minutes. I just want to congratulate the three members for raising important questions, because there are questions that need to be dealt with. But I particularly wanted to praise the member for York Centre. He's one of the few members who stood to speak in this place without notes and spoke intelligently and gave an historical overview; defined, for example, "defined benefit plan." The bankers, I know, would understand these things, but I'm sure a whole lot of other people out there don't know the difference between a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan. I thought he made it very easy to understand and made an important contribution. I suspect that during that intervention a whole lot of people stayed on the television set just to try to understand what he was saying by way of this particular bill, by way of his own bill that he introduced in 1970, and the questions he raised. I just wanted to praise him for his contribution.

2100

Interjection: That's it?

Mr Marchese: I'm speaking later.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I would like to make a comment. The member for Trinity-Spadina mentioned that there would be a lot of people who would stay tuned to listen to this debate. I would like to point out to him that there is a Leafs game on tonight and they are playing Philadelphia.

Mr Caplan: What's the score?

Mr Chudleigh: I'm not sure what the score is. I've been in here all night, of course, being involved—

Interjections.

Mr Chudleigh: I certainly take this job extremely seriously, and I want the whip to notice that I've been in here all night.

One thing the listeners might have misconstrued from the debate—"misconstrued" may be too strong a word; perhaps "not understood fully" is more fair. There is categorically no more money going into the plan for the MPPs, the plan which 61 MPPs who were elected prior to 1995 were part of, the old pension plan, that gold-plated pension plan that no government in Ontario had ever had the guts to withdraw, no government ever had the guts to

touch. In 1995-96, our government withdrew this gold-plated pension plan which cost the taxpayers of Ontario about \$31,000 per year for every elected member in this House, a disgustingly rich program which no other person in Ontario would get, other than federal MPs. Federal MPs are still getting an even richer program.

Hon Mr Sampson: Would they be Liberals?

Mr Chudleigh: They would be Liberals. They would be 101 Dalmations, Liberals from Ontario, in Ottawa, unable to reduce that ridiculously rich—

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair would like to mention—

Mr Chudleigh: Damn, I'm out of time.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Don Valley East.

Mr Caplan: Thank you, Speaker. It's certainly interesting to hear the comments of the other members, but I want to say that the members for Essex, York Centre and Kingston and the Islands made some very excellent points about this bill, and I think especially the member for Kingston and the Islands. He asked, why the need to have two parts to pension legislation, one for everyone in the province of Ontario and one for a very exclusive group of people? Why do that?

We on this side of the House feel that you should be able to have fair access, but there should not be any special consideration for a small, significant group of people. I think that really highlights the crux of the matter. If this is such a pressing concern, if this is something that really needs to be addressed, we should have two bills. But like a lot of the legislation that the Harris government comes out with, they wrap various issues into one.

Earlier today we dealt with Bill 23, health care legislation, part dealing with the tobacco industry but another part giving the Minister of Health the power to close hospitals: two distinct pieces of legislation, two distinct ideas, yet they're wrapped up in one bill. It seems to be a common and repeated pattern when this government wants to surreptitiously slip things in, when they want to do public business and policy matters that perhaps have some controversy: slide it into another piece of legislation out of public view. I think that's very dangerous. We need to have full debate; we need to have full discussion.

Certainly the move towards greater regulatory power for ministers of this government—I see the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who has crowned himself king of Ontario, has given himself unlimited power in his municipal restructuring bill.

Mr Chudleigh: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Serendipitously, Minister, I'd like to slip in something. I understand the Phillies are leading 2-0 in the Toronto game.

The Deputy Speaker: That was not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I think the member from Kingston and the Islands for the most part—I was watching as I was working in my office—did cover a substantive part of the

bill. However, he did at the end deteriorate into an overarching criticism of the MPP pension portion. There are members on his side, long-serving members, who I'm sure would take exception to some of the suggestions he made. I would mention the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member for St Catharines, and other members that—

Mr Caplan: Parry Sound.

Mr O'Toole: Parry Sound as well. But I would say the member for Don Valley East—everyone would know that his mother served here, respectfully; was a minister; would have received some of that entitlement; would now be able to collect it; is now serving federally and, when serving federally, will accumulate the pension entitlement and in fact could be triple-dipping. That's almost a record in any Olympic diving event—a triple Salchow or whatever.

If you want to really pay some respect, the member for Trinity-Spadina mentioned the banking community. I think the member for Mississauga Centre, as a minister and a previous, well-acclaimed member of the financial community, should stand and respond to that, because he knows the importance of this legislation to help the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Kingston and the Islands has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gerretsen: If the member for Durham had listened carefully, he would have heard me say, first of all, that the first part of the bill benefits many people in Ontario, and I totally applaud that.

He also would have heard me say that the gold-plated pension plan—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Durham, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen: We have beneficiaries in all three parties, and the arrangement that was made and the bill that your government introduced and passed was wrong. I said it then; I'll say it now. I don't care how it affects people on an individual basis in this Legislature, it was wrong.

Actually, Mr Chudleigh, member from Halton, your figures are even better than mine. I said that the deferred payment plan was somewhere between \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year per member for every year that they served here, under the old system. But you actually worked it out to exactly \$31,000. Those plans were wrong, no question about it. What wasn't made clear by some of the earlier speakers is that there is no pension plan for MPPs. I run into many, many people who still think that there is.

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, yes, there's a fair number of people who still think there are.

Now, I know the manner in which the government and the government members have decided to attack this is by attacking the federal plan. It may very well be that the federal plan is wrong too; I don't know enough about it.

But what we're dealing with right now is the provincial plan, and I would like you or someone to get up and say why you are exempting the MPP portion of this act from the new provisions that you're trying to pass in the first part of this bill, under the Pension Benefits Act. There is no justification for it.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: I've got so many fans on the other side. I'm glad they're staying. But before I—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll not warn the member for Durham again. I will try to maintain order in here as I see fit, but I would appreciate it if you would address the comments through the Chair. Member for Trinity-Spadina, I'd appreciate it if you would direct the comments through the Chair.

2110

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I'm going to do my best to look at you as often as I can, because that is for me the source of all intelligence and knowledge and authority. I'm going to do my best. But before I do that, I need to have unanimous consent to stand down our lead because our critic couldn't be here to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Because the member for Trinity-Spadina was speaking so quietly, I wasn't quite sure of the purpose of his request for unanimous consent.

The Deputy Speaker: He requested that his party's leadoff time be set aside and he would take a 20-minute round of debate. Is that agreed? It's agreed.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. This is a very odd night.

I am very happy to make a modest contribution to this debate tonight. I say "modest" because it's a small group of New Democrats that we have here, with fewer resources, but we had an opportunity to look at this at 6 o'clock today so we have a few things to say. I want to say, to those who are watching, that you're in competition tonight with two things: the hockey game and with Peter Kormos, who is on City-TV at this very moment.

Mr Chudleigh: What channel is that?

Mr Marchese: City-TV. People know in Toronto, and others.

This is a very complicated bill. If people out there are watching you and me tonight, I say God bless, but I don't think if I were watching this program tonight I'd be out there with popcorn and pop—not for this issue, and let me tell you why. Let me read section 8. If this wouldn't put you to sleep, imagine the audience.

"Currently, a pension plan is not eligible for registration under the act unless it is administered by a person who is described in a list in subsection 8(1) of the act. An amendment to that subsection expands the list of persons to include one or more employers where there are multiple employers and an administrator appointed by the Superintendent of Financial Services under section 71 of the act."

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of the Environment, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Dispense.

Mr Marchese: One of the members said, "Dispense." That's exactly what the public watching tonight is probably saying: "Dispense."

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I've got more fans here tonight. I am surrounded by some Conservative friends who came here to support me. I'm very pleased because I need all the help I can get sometimes.

I just read a section that I don't think anybody out there listening—and if they are, I say God bless—understood, and I'm not sure how many people might want to understand. But it does have some significance, and we have some concerns because, while it may appear incomprehensible and very harmless, this is what they're saying: that in a multi-employer pension plan, the administrator may be one of the employers but in fact it would strip away a significant right won by workers.

I know one minister quizzically says, "What?" But it's true, that's why I refer to it. In court cases it has been determined that multi-employer plans must be administered by a board of trustees, with half of the board made up of representatives of the employees.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: You see, the banker knows. He's been there; he knows. Maybe he was part of those discussions.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): We read our bills.

Mr Marchese: And some of them read their bills—the former Minister of Municipal Affairs. I credit him with—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Not critical at all. You do read your bills. I have a great deal of respect for that member.

But this section undermines some of those—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: The banker says no again. I outline a problem and he nods his head and says no. Clearly this is a problem, and I think he knows that. I think my other two friends who came to support me know this as well.

We as New Democrats believe that all pension plans should give equal say to the employees, and if they don't they are wrong. I suspect, but I'm not sure, this is a section that employers lobbied very strongly to have in here. I'm sure they wanted the government to quickly take away this right that has been won in court.

Hon Mr Sampson: Read it again.

Mr Marchese: I read it. He listened to it. He says no. I say we have some questions. They say they're right, because Tories are always right. Isn't that so? Always, always. They say they're right, and we say we're raising a question in this regard. We believe this section undermines a right that has been won in court that would have such plans administered by a board of trustees where they would have significant representation by the employees. This section presents a significant problem to me individually and to our caucus, and I know that our critic will speak more to it on another day.

The other section is one that many people have commented on, particularly Conservative members. I could be wrong, but this was almost their entire focus. It is section 67:

"An amendment to section 67 of the act permits the superintendent, upon application, to consent to the commutation"—that's a big word, isn't it? I think it's a big word—"or surrender, in whole or in part, a person's prescribed retirement savings arrangement in case of financial hardship. The criteria for determining whether a financial hardship exists are to be established by regulation. Limits on the superintendent's power to consent may also be prescribed."

Difficult stuff. I think it must be written by lawyers. That's why it's always so complicated to understand. That's why I liked the contribution by the member for York Centre. He made things easy to understand, unlike so many lawyers who make it impossible for ordinary folk to simply follow some of this stuff in ways they could understand and participate. Isn't that true? Two lawyers nodding in agreement. Because if they don't understand, they don't participate.

This section obviously would permit people who otherwise would have had their pensions locked in to be able, in certain circumstances, to take their money out. A few people have commented that that's a good thing.

The member for York Centre, on the other hand, raises some important questions. Those questions are critical for those who are watching, and for other MPPs, particularly on the other side, to consider. While it may be tempting to have the choice or the power to take your money out where you have locked-in money, what if you decide—however they define "hardship" later in regulation—to take your money out, because it's tempting, and you spend it all? You might end up spending it in a very short period of time and soon after find yourself bereft of any source of income. What then? You could potentially become dependent on the state—dare I say welfare support? It's a potential problem.

I can understand, in a situation where someone might be facing a terminal illness and might decide, in that particular instance, to take the money out and use it, either to comfort oneself or to have all the comforts one may want and/or need at a time that obviously is very critical and to decide how to spend that money. Under that particular circumstance, yes, it might make sense. In that regard, I am fully supportive. But we leave ourselves vulnerable, and working men and women leave themselves vulnerable, depending on the definition of "hardship" that is to be prescribed later, to which we have no access because it will be done by regulation. It could present some problems.

2120

The member for York Centre raised this, and I share with him some of those concerns. I don't think the members opposite should minimize those concerns, because it is part of the human condition to say: "I'm having a difficult time. I want to be able to take my money out." It's part of the human condition to say, "I'm

going to use that money," and find yourself within a short period of time having spent a great deal of it and then you have very little left. The people who could be tempted to do that, I suspect, are more those who have less money than those who have more money. The very people who need—thank you, former Minister of Culture, for coming, through you, Speaker. Those who have money are not likely to want to do that because they have their own means of protecting themselves, defend themselves or have access to money to be able to do whatever they need to do. It's those who probably have less money who become more vulnerable, and that is my concern. Pensions were designed in such a way as to protect them for the later years.

We speak to this because I think the members on the other side have to be very careful, when we go into committee for debate, in terms of how this will be defined and how we have those checks and balances, while at the same time I say that this provision in some circumstances can be very helpful.

I want to read another section where we have some problems, and that's section 93, for the benefit of those who have popcorn in hand or are enthusiastic viewers of this program and are very interested in this subject:

"A new section 93 of the Act authorizes agreements to be made with other Canadian jurisdictions with respect to multi-jurisdictional pension plans. The new section allows the agreements to provide that, in the circumstances specified in an agreement, all or part of the pension benefits legislation of one of the jurisdictions applies to a multi-jurisdictional pension plan and all or part of the pension benefits legislation of the other jurisdictions does not apply to it. The agreements may provide for other matters relating to the enforcement of the pension benefits legislation of the applicable jurisdictions."

Isn't that a mouthful? It is. That's why we need the member for York Centre, because he simplifies a lot of this stuff. That's what the other members on the other side should do, because they had weeks and weeks to get into this stuff and to, with their whole hour, section by section explain it in simple terms that people watching can understand so they would have the benefit of their experience, knowledge, research, ministry staff and all that.

Section 95 now:

"Currently, section 95 of the Act authorizes agreements to be made with other Canadian jurisdictions about the administration of pension plans. An amendment to section 95 provides for the delegation of the superintendent's powers under those agreements, and provides for delegations of power to the superintendent from the other jurisdictions." Mr O'Toole must have read this.

"An amendment to section 106 and the new section 106.1 of the Act concern the powers of the superintendent to make examinations, investigations and inquiries relating to pension plans. The amendments allow the superintendent to require specified persons to pay all or part of the costs of an examination, investigation or"

It really is tiring, isn't it? But that's why I read it, to tell you that unless we help those viewers out there to better understand what you people are presenting, they're not going to watch this program.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister of Correctional Services, come to order.

Mr Marchese: So all of you with your omnipotent, omniscient powers, please help us out. Because they haven't, we're raising this concern. I'm raising this concern with this section because it's a subtle one, but I'm told that some employers have been lobbying intensely for it. I know why employers are behind some of these sections, but they won't tell you. They're going to say: "Oh, no, this is all for the little guy, the ordinary person. Some sections, yes, are good for people because they've been calling our offices," and all of that.

But some of this stuff is snuck in and it helps employers a great deal. Sections 93 and 95 do that especially. They relate to pension plans with members in more than one province, as many have. Currently, such plans are registered in the province where they have most members, which is usually Ontario.

Hon Mr Sampson: Not always.

Mr Marchese: Not always but usually. That's why I said "usually." Each member is covered by pension laws from the province in which he or she lives. So far it sounds simple, but we're coming to a problem. This provision would allow for interprovincial agreements that could allow Ontario workers—"could allow," that's why it's here—to be covered by a plan registered in another province and covered by that province's pension laws.

Hon Mr Sampson: Not if they move.

Mr Marchese: No, not if they move. The problem is that Ontario pension laws, in our humble, modest view, are better for workers in many important ways, and we offer one example, but there are probably more. If we have time, we'll be able to get into that.

Time is running short. Do you see the problem we've got, Speaker? The third party gets so little time to speak in this place. We have but a few minutes to finish this off.

Under Ontario law, when a pension plan is, as they say, wound up, employees have the right to grow into some provisions. For example, if a factor 80 on reduced pension is available, a worker whose plan is wound up when he or she is at factor 78 is forever out of luck if there is no grow-in provision. But in Ontario the clock keeps running, like here. The worker is no longer accumulating years of service but is continuing to get older, so—bingo, right?—two years later he or she hits factor 80 and is eligible for an unreduced early pension. This is a benefit that obviously is good for Ontarians as we have it under the provisions currently, so we on this side want to keep it. Only Nova Scotia has such a provision. Passing this section could only open the door for an agreement that would allow large companies to shop around to register their pension plans in other provinces with less worker-friendly provisions. That is the problem we have with this section.

Last, before I finish, in relation to the MPP provision that is here, it gives retired MPPs special treatment by unlocking their locked-in RSPs with no conditions except that they be age 55. That is what I think the member from York Centre was getting at: not that they're getting more money, necessarily, but this is a special provision. That's all he was saying and that's all we are saying, and if you just say that, it won't be so bad. That is what I'm saying to my good friends on the other side.

Speaker, I thank you for your attention and for keeping this House in the order that you've kept them in today. I appreciate that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 9:30, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 2128.

CONTENTS

Thursday 9 December 1999

SECOND READINGS

Pension Benefits Statute Law

Amendment Act, Bill 27, *Mr Eves*

Mr Skarica	1311
Mr Dunlop	1312
Mr O'Toole.....	1314, 1320, 1328
Mr Caplan.....	1318, 1328
Mr Kormos	1319
Mrs Marland	1319
Mr Crozier	1319, 1320
Mr Kwinter	1322
Mr Gerretsen.....	1325, 1328
Mr Marchese.....	1327, 1329
Mr Chudleigh.....	1327
Debate deemed adjourned.....	1331

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Jeudi 9 décembre 1999

DEUXIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 1999 modifiant des lois concernant les régimes

de retraite, projet de loi 27,

M. Eves

Débat présumé ajourné	1331
-----------------------------	------

